

SPECIAL ENLARGED CHRISTMAS NUMBER

The

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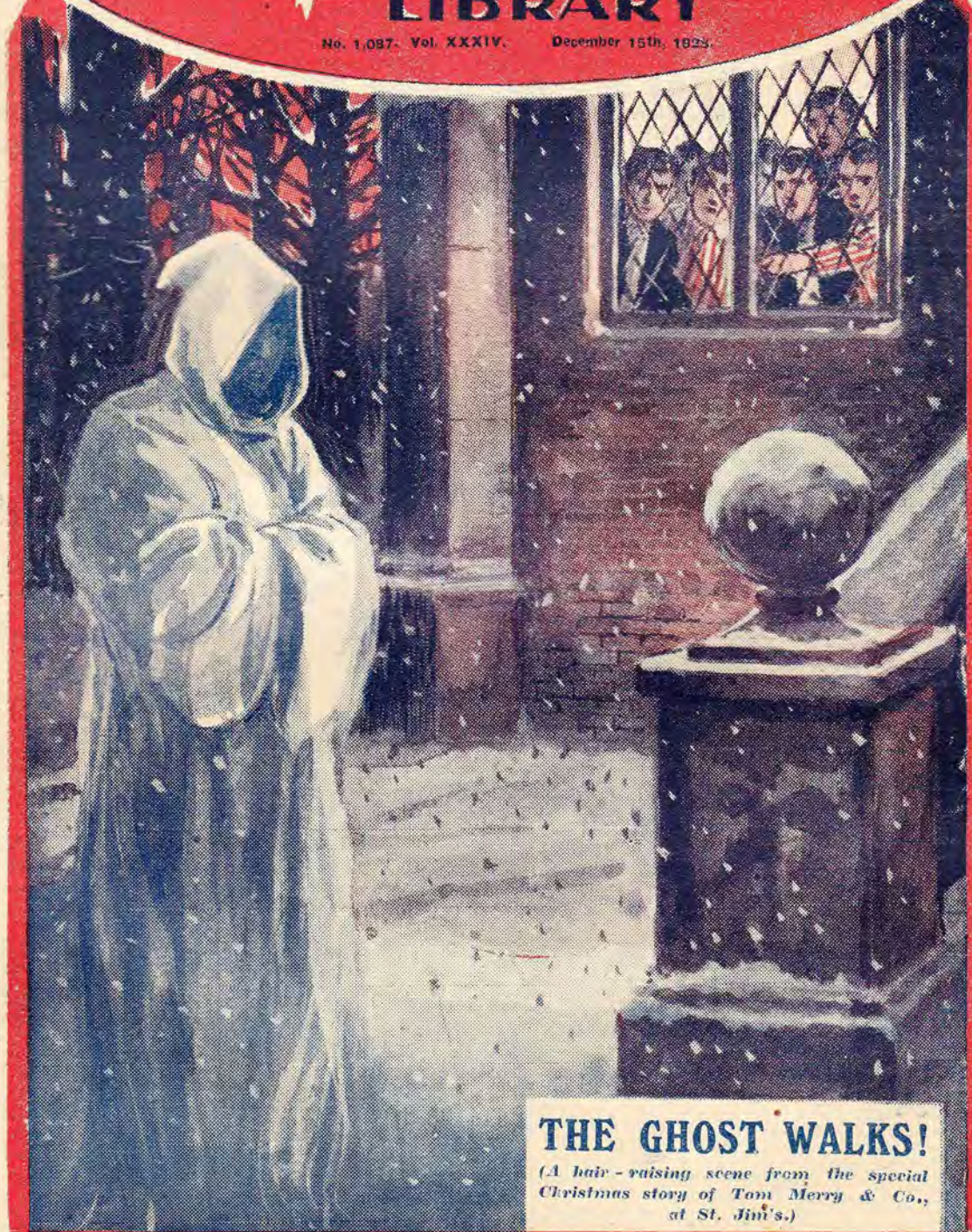
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EVERY
WEDNESDAY

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THE GHOST WALKS!

(A hair-raising scene from the special Christmas story of Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's.)

A ROUSING EXTRA-LONG TALE OF CHRISTMAS ADVENTURE—

The Haunted



Christmas! What would it be without snow and snow-fights, japes galore, fun, excitement, and—ghosts? Pull the armchair up to the fire and get started on this story of the Chums of St. Jim's, which is brimming over with the spirit of Yuletide!

CHAPTER 1. The Shape in the Snow

BOOM!

It was one o'clock.

The Fourth Form dormitory at St. Jim's was shrouded in darkness, but for the pale light that streamed in through the long windows, making faint splashes of grey on the floor. The deep breathing of the sleeping fellows could be heard softly in the silence, broken by a faint muttering from Percy Mellish—the sneak of the Fourth was evidently having a bad dream.

"Oh, lor'!"

The mutter came from Baggy Trimble's bed.

Baggy Trimble, the fattest junior in the School House, was the only fellow awake. And evidently, from the faint groan that followed his exclamation, Baggy was not exactly happy at that stillly hour of the night.

"Ow! Oh, my hat!"

Baggy wriggled under the bedclothes. His fat hands were

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clapsed over his ample middle, and his face in the darkness, had assumed the colour of putty.

"Grooooooh!"

Baggy moaned in anguish.

Baggy had the curious feeling that a wild-cat had been let loose inside him, and was doing its best to claw its way out. Hence his wriggles and his groans.

It was certainly Baggy's own fault that he was suffering! He had spent most of that day in trying to raise a loan from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth, assuring that noble youth that he was expecting a postal-order by next morning's post. Gussy had not believed in that expected postal-order—he knew Baggy far too well. But Arthur Augustus was a good-natured individual, and he was a wealthy fellow, too. In the end, he had lent Baggy Trimble five shillings—more to get rid of him than anything else, since he knew that those five shillings would never return to him again! Baggy had promptly scuttled off to Dame Taggles' little tuckshop under the elms, and there had indulged in doughnuts and cream-buns until the five shillings was no more. And now he was feeling quite surprised that he had been disturbed in the middle of the night by curious and uncomfortable sensations in the region of his middle.

"Ow! Groooooh! This is awful!" Baggy squirmed in his

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—FEATURING TOM MERRY & CO., THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S!

School!

by Martin Clifford



branches to the night sky, were now rapidly turning into snow-white skeletons. When St. Jim's awoke in the morning it would be to find a white world.

"Blow it!" growled Baggy. It looked strangely eerie, out there in the snow-filled night. The ghostly whiteness of it all seemed to give off a light of its own in the darkness.

Baggy shivered. A sudden loud mutter from Herries in his sleep caused Baggy to jump nervously and glance round at the shadowy dormitory with vague apprehension. The long room looked strangely spectral; and the utter silence outside, as the snow fell in weird eddying swirls that looked uncommonly like ghostly shapes, worked unpleasantly on Baggy's imagination.

"This is the sort of night when the blessed monk walks," muttered Baggy, and shivered again—not with cold.

The legend of the white monk that was supposed to haunt the school, making its appearance on nights when snow lay on the ground, was known to everyone at St. Jim's, from Kildare to the youngest fag.

The story was simply a romantic legend, passed down from the old days when monks had inhabited the buildings on the site of St. Jim's. Only a few of the very timid juniors might have a haunting fear that the story could be true; most of the fellows had far too much healthy common sense. But Baggy was just the kind of fellow to get scared. And as he peered out with wide eyes into the night, at that glittering expanse that hid everything else from sight, he tried to dismiss the memory of the ghostly legend from his mind.

"Of course, there aren't any such things as blessed spooks, anyway," Baggy told himself, trying to be brave. "I don't believe in blessed ghosts! But—"

His words broke off abruptly.

Baggy was staring wide-eyed through the window, and his mouth had opened feebly. His hair seemed almost to be standing on end.

He felt sure that he had seen a white, gliding shape pass under the old elms.

With chattering teeth, Baggy stared down, glued to the window with a dreadful fascination, despite his wish to turn and bolt back to his bed.

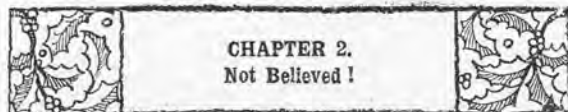
Then he gave a gasp of utter terror.

There was no doubt of it, this time. Baggy had not been mistaken. A tall, white figure had moved out from the elms, dimly seen through the falling snowflakes—a monkish figure with a white cowl drawn over its face, that went gliding with downcast head in the direction of the chapel.

It was not imagination—it was really there! Baggy felt a cold dew on his forehead, and his knees almost collapsed beneath his weight.

The figure went gliding on its way, a spectral shape. Baggy's tongue clove to the roof of his mouth. Then at last he found the use of his voice, and an ear-splitting scream rang through the dormitory.

Baggy dropped to the floor, a huddled shape. He had fainted!



CHAPTER 2. Not Believed!

WHEN Baggy Trimble opened his eyes it was to find Kildare of the Sixth bending anxiously over him, and a crowd of juniors gathered round the bed on which he had been laid.

"He's coming round," came the voice of Jack Blake, in a hushed whisper.

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bed. "Yooooop!" he added, with a squeal, as a particularly hot spasm shot around inside him.

In the gloom, Baggy's face took on a delicate shade of green. Had he been in a bunk of a particularly small steamer in a particularly large storm, he could not have felt worse.

"Grooooooh!"

Baggy could stand it no longer. He crawled miserably out of bed and slipped a dressing-gown round his portly frame, and slippers on his fat feet. With beads of perspiration standing out on his brow, he began to walk up and down between the silent beds. Walking, he did not feel quite so bad. To lie still any longer was impossible.

"Ow! Those blessed cream-buns must have been wiffy!" gulped Baggy. "I've a good mind to complain to the Head that Mrs. Taggles sells wiffy stuff!"

As a matter of fact, Dame Taggles sold only the best; but even the best, when devoured in such huge quantities as Baggy devoured them, were bound to cause trouble! The fat Fourth-Former was paying the penalty for his gluttony with a vengeance.

"Groooooh! It's really all that beast Gussy's fault!" mumbled Baggy, sitting down on the edge of his bed, and glaring across at the sleeping form of Arthur Augustus. "I dare say he lent me that five bob just because he knew Mrs. Taggles was getting rid of a lot of old stock, or something, and he hoped it would make me ill! The rotter!"

Baggy Trimble was not exactly of a grateful nature.

The wild-cat seemed still to be busy inside him. With another groan, the Falstaff of the Fourth commenced to roll up and down the floor in a fat waddle. At the end of the dormitory, he paused by one of the windows and stared out. An exclamation escaped him.

"Snow!"

All that day the sky had been heavy and overcast, and all the St. Jim's juniors had hoped that it meant snow. Evidently it did! For Baggy, staring out of the window, saw a whirling cloud of heavy white flakes dropping past.

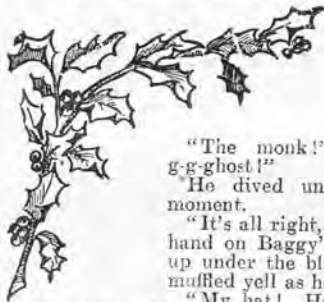
"My hat! It's snowing!"

Any other junior would have been thoroughly delighted at the sight. But not Baggy Trimble! He hated snow. He had no use for snowballing, or sliding, or tobogganing.

It was with added discontent on his fat face that he rolled nearer the window and peered out.

The snow was falling heavily.

The sill outside the dormitory window was thick with it. The quad could be seen as an expanse of trackless white. Roofs and gables were hidden beneath a blanket of gleaming snow, and the leafless elms, stretching their black, bare



Baggy blinked round in a vague way. Then suddenly the memory of what he had seen in the quad came to him. He gave a frightened yell.

"The monk!" gasped Baggy. "The g-g-ghost!"

He dived under the bedclothes in a moment.

"It's all right, Trimble!" Kildare laid a hand on Baggy's shoulder, where it stuck up under the blankets, and Baggy gave a muffled yell as he felt the touch.

"My hat! He seems scared to death!" muttered Tom Merry, the captain of the Shell. Tom Merry, and several other Shell fellows, as well as Kildare, had come running to the Fourth Form dormitory when Baggy's scream of terror had roused them from their sleep. "What the dickens can have happened?"

"Trimble!" exclaimed Kildare.

"Ow! I'm not here!" came the muffled voice of the fat Fourth-Former. "T-t-tell the ghost I'm not here!"

"The ghost?" echoed Kildare, with knitted brows. "What do you mean, Trimble? For goodness' sake, come out from those blankets and tell us what's happened."

At last Baggy put a cautious head out, and blinked round. Kildare's presence had reassured him somewhat.

"Has it gone?" he demanded in a quaking voice.

"Has what gone?" asked Kildare quietly. "What frightened you, Trimble?"

The crowd of juniors around the bed waited with breathless interest for Baggy's answer.

"The ghost of the monk!" gasped Baggy. "I saw it! It was out in the quad! Ooo-er!"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Kildare. "You must have been dreaming, Trimble!"

"Rats!" grunted Baggy, sitting up in bed and glancing round nervously. "I saw it as clearly as I can see you—so there! A blessed monk, gliding under the elms! I—I—I saw the blessed thing, I tell you!"

There was no doubt of Baggy's earnestness. The fellows glanced at one another. Kildare frowned.

"There are no such things as ghosts, Trimble! You must have imagined it!"

"I didn't!" hooted Trimble. All his courage had returned now that he was surrounded by fellow-human beings. "I saw it gliding about! It had eyes like coals of fire!" he added as an afterthought.

Kildare gave an impatient exclamation.

"You were dreaming!"

"I think Trimble must have seen something," put in Tom Merry quietly. "He wouldn't faint for nothing, you know."

"That's so." The captain nodded, with a frowning brow. "It's very queer. Trimble, I suppose you saw something that you imagined to be the ghost monk of the school legend—a cat, perhaps, in the snow—"

"Or a snow-coveted bush, pewwaps, Twimble," suggested Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, adjusting his eyeglass and drawing his gorgeous silken dressing-gown more tightly round himself.

"Rats!" said Trimble, with determination. "It was the school ghost! I tell you—"

"How was it you were at the window?" asked Kildare.

"I felt ill," grunted Trimble. "I got out to walk up and down. Mrs. Taggles ought to be shown up. She must have sold me some wiffy grub—"

"More likely you ate too much," said Kildare shortly. "Well, Trimble, you seem to have had a fright, but you can take it from me that whatever you saw wasn't a ghost—since there are no ghosts! You can make your mind easy on that. You feel all right now?"

"Y-yes," said Trimble, with a nervous glance in the direction of the windows.

"Now then, you kids—get back to bed!" rapped out Kildare. "Merry—Lowther—Grundy—what are you doing here? All you Shell kids get back to your own dormitory!"

The Shell fellows reluctantly obeyed, and the Fourth-Formers scrambled back into bed. Kildare turned again to Trimble.

"Your imagination played a trick on you, Trimble," said the captain patiently. "You saw something out there in the snow, and you thought it looked like a ghost."

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"Oh, really, Kildare—"

"So get to sleep and forget it!" finished the captain kindly.

"Oh, but really, Kildare—"

"That'll do! Get to sleep!"

Baggy relapsed into an indignant silence. Kildare glanced round the dormitory, snapped out the light, and went out. Instantly Baggy was bombarded by a score of questions.

By now, even Baggy himself was beginning to wonder whether he really had seen that monkish figure in the snow, or whether it had only been some extraordinary kind of dream. But he did not mean to admit the fact. Baggy always liked being the centre of interest.

"What did you really see, Baggy?" chuckled Herries.

"A sparrow, or what?"

Baggy snorted.

"I saw the giddy ghost!" he roared. "It came swaying and drifting past the window, with eyes of fire, and glared in at me as it passed."

"I thought you said you saw it walking under the elms in the quad?" exclaimed Blake, chuckling.

"Oh, rats!"

Baggy was beginning to feel just a trifle vague as to what he really had or had not seen. The fainting fit had left his mind rather indistinct about the happenings immediately beforehand. But Baggy had a rich imagination, and he meant to thrill his hearers till their hair stood on end.

"I felt a ghostly, unseen hand seize me," he went on, "by the shoulder, and draw me against my will out of bed to the window. I was almost in a trance. Then the ghost monk tapped on the window—"

"Oh, shut up, you fat clam!" growled Wil Drake.

"You disbelieving rotters!" shrieked Trimble. "I saw its ghastly, glaring eyes—"

"Shut up, and let a chap get to sleep!" exclaimed Kerruish threateningly. "If you don't, you may not see any more spooks, but you'll see stars all right!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy Trimble relapsed into a disgruntled silence. By letting his imagination run riot as he had done he had hoped to thrill his Form-fellows, but had only succeeded in making them believe that his whole story was made up.

But, even so, it seemed curious to some of the more thoughtful fellows that Baggy had been found lying unconscious.

"I wonder if there can have been somethin' in Twimble's stow?" whispered Arthur Augustus to Herries, in the next bed.

"Of course not!" grunted Herries sleepily. "I say, we'll have a snow fight with the New House bounders to-morrow! Isn't all this snow just ripping?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The snow was still falling steadily past the dormitory windows. Had the mysterious figure that Baggy had seen left any tracks they would be obliterated by morning.

One by one the Fourth-Formers fell off to sleep. But for a long time Baggy Trimble lay awake, staring at the long windows and the falling snowflakes, and wondering.

What had he seen out there in the snow?

That was a question that even Baggy himself could not answer.



CHAPTER 3. Not Knox!



"STILL snowing!"
"Good!"

Wally D'Arcy of the Third, sitting by the counter in Mrs. Murphy's tuckshop, at Rykcombe, grinned as he glanced out of the little shop window.

Wally was accompanied by Curly Gibson, and the pair of fags were enjoying a hearty tea. It was the afternoon following Trimble's midnight fright, and it was a half-holiday. Wally and Curly had spent that afternoon in the snow. They had snowballed some New House fags; they had snowballed Taggles, the porter; they had snowballed an unfortunate Grammar School senior from behind a hedge, and had escaped without his catching them; they had snowballed some village youths in Rykcombe.

In the last instance they had rather got the worst of things, the odds being heavily against them, and the swollen





appearance of Wally's nose remained as a memento of a particularly hard snowball that had landed there.

But the two scapegraces of the Third had enjoyed themselves thoroughly. They both looked warm and glowing with health, and their appetites were immense as they polished off plate after plate of good things. Wally was in funds, and there was no stint.

To complete their happiness, it was still snowing!

Scurrying flakes whirled down busily, deepening the white drifts at every moment. Snowflakes stuck to the tiny panes of Mrs. Murphy's window, and piled on the sills of the windows of the cottages opposite, where already lights were beginning to glow, golden, in the early December dusk.

A robin came hopping on to the window-ledge, and Wally chuckled.

"Everything looks like a blessed Christmas card!" he muttered gleefully. "It's not so long before Christmas, either!"

"Rather not!" nodded Curly, with great satisfaction. "We break up for the hols jolly soon! I—Hallo! Look!"

He had broken off suddenly, pointing. Wally glanced out through the window quickly.

The doorway of a little tobacconist's shop on the other side of the village street could be seen from Mrs. Murphy's window. A tall figure had halted outside, and was glancing up and down the snowy street. It was Gerald Knox, the blackguardly prefect of the Sixth.

"My hat! I believe he's going in there for smokes!" breathed Wally.

Knox, pretending to look into the window of the shop next to the tobacconist's, was still glancing warily around.

Evidently there was no one in sight, for the next moment the shady Sixth-Former had turned and quickly stepped into the tobacconist's, little dreaming of the two pairs of eyes watching him from the little tuckshop.

"Great pip!" muttered Curly. "The smoky rotter! He's got a nerve to go in there, right in the middle of the village, too!"

"He's so used to being a shady bounder he's come to think he'll never be caught, I s'pose!" grunted Wally disgustedly. Then suddenly his face brightened. "I'll tell you what! Let's snowball him as he comes out!"

"Bit risky, isn't it?" objected Curly.

"Rats! We'll hide round the corner there. Besides, if he did see us he wouldn't dare do anything, not after having been seen in that shop! Come on!"

Their feed had already been paid for, and in another moment the two fags had gobbled up the last tart and hurried out gleefully into the street.

Keeping out of sight of anyone within the tobacconist's Wally and Curly sped across the road, and into hiding round the corner of the shop. Hastily they began scooping up the handfuls of snow and pressing them into big snowballs.

"He'll be out again in a jiff!" chuckled Wally.

"Here he comes now!" breathed Curly, his eyes gleaming.

The two fags could hear footsteps crossing the floor within the shop as someone came towards the door. Wally and Curly grasped their two biggest snowballs, and waited, arms drawn back, ready for a throw. A dark figure loomed up in the doorway and stepped out.

Whizz!

Wally's snowball flew through the air.

There was a yell from his victim as the snowball plastered itself lovingly over his face. Then Curly's snowball landed on

the tall figure's left ear, and he yelled again. But the next moment the two Third-Formers gave gasps of consternation.

For it was not Knox who had received their snowballs!

Now that the man had stepped out from the doorway and was struggling to wipe the melting snow from his eyes and ear, they saw that it was another of the tobacconist's customers that had suffered at their hasty hands. And Wally recognised the man.

"Luke Crow!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Luke Crow was a well-known figure in the neighbourhood. He was a rather mysterious character, who lived on the other side of Rylcombe, and, according to all accounts, never did any work. During the day-time he would hang about the village, and was a frequent visitor to the Green Man, the village hostelry. What he did at night was, presumably, his own affair. But there were those who considered it to be their affair, too—such as the gamekeepers of the various estates within a big radius of Rylcombe! And P.-c. Crump, the village "bobby," always eyed the shambling figure of

Luke Crow with great disfavour, and would receive a shifty glance and a growl in exchange.

It was common knowledge, too, that Colonel Bland, one of the school governors, who owned a big estate near St. Jim's, had promised himself the pleasure of landing Luke Crow in the dock one day in connection with various mysterious disappearances of pheasants and rabbits and hares from his preserves.

Altogether Luke Crow was an ill-humoured scoundrel with a decidedly unsavoury reputation.

Grasping the thick cudgel that he carried, the man turned, with a torrent of imprecations, and caught sight of Wally and Curly.

In another moment he had broken into a run towards them.

"Scat!" gasped Wally.

The warning was unnecessary! Already Curly had turned to run.

A narrow lane joined the village street beside the tobacconist's shop, and it was up this winding lane that the two fags were sprinting, with the pursuer hot on their heels. They had vanished from sight round the bend, with the poacher still after them, by the time that Knox came out of the tobacconist's shop, little dreaming of the trouble his visit there had caused.

In the lane the two fags raced on, looking rather white and scared. They hoped to outdistance their pursuer, but Luke Crow was still keeping up a swift pace with long, lanky strides. There was a very ugly look on his unshaven, bony countenance as he pounded after them through the dusk.

"Keep it up!" panted Wally, as Curly began to fall a little behind.

"I—I can't go any faster!" gasped Curly miserably. "Don't wait for me! He'll catch us up, and—and—"

The next moment Curly had slipped in the snow and gone pitching face downwards into a deep drift. Wally halted, grim-faced, and ran to help his chum. But Curly was too winded to rise quickly, and by the time he had scrambled to his feet again their pursuer was on them.

A muscular hand reached out and grasped Wally by the collar in a vice-like grip.

"Got yer, by hokey!" cried Luke Crow, with hoarse triumph.





CHAPTER 4.

Grundy, the Hero!

THERE was an ugly, malevolent gleam in the eyes of the poacher as he glared down at his prisoner.

"Now, you young varmint—"

"Let go!" panted Wally, struggling desperately.

The man gave an ugly laugh. Curly Gibson clenched his fists.

"Let him go, you rotter!" he cried.

"Snowball me, would yer?" muttered Luke Crow. "I'll teach yer!"

He gave Wally's arm a cruel twist. It was all Wally could do to keep back a cry of pain.

That was enough for Curly Gibson! He saw the look of pain in his chum's face, and the next moment he had flung himself blindly at Wally's captor. He could not reach the man's face with his fists, but he punched madly at the man's velvet waistcoat till Luke Crow gave a breathless grunt.

"Stop that, ye young wildcat!" he roared, and with a foul oath, he dashed his fist into Curly's face, sending the fug reeling blindly into the snow, where he lay half-dazed.

"Now, you little imp, I'll teach yer to snowball me!" growled Luke Crow evilly, and twisting Wally across his knee, he lifted his cudgel.

Wally squirmed and wriggled, but he was helpless in the scoundrel's muscular grasp.

The cudgel fell with cruel force, but Wally gritted his teeth and did not cry out. Again the man struck, and this time it was more than the plucky youngster could bear. A cry of pain rang out through the snowy dusk.

"I'll make yer yell!" cried the man gloatingly.

He raised his thick stick a third time.

Curly was staggering on his feet, a red weal across his cheek, and his lip cut and bleeding.

"You brute!" he panted, half sobbing. Dazed though the youngster still was, he had pluck in plenty, and he flung himself forward, tearing desperately at the hand that held Wally.

But he was powerless to open the strong fingers that grasped Wally's coat. Luke Crow laughed and brought the stick whistling down. Again there was a cry of pain from Wally D'Arcy.

And then Curly gave a shout, for a running figure had loomed up suddenly in the whirling snowflakes; the snow on the narrow lane had deadened all sound of the newcomer's approach, and for the moment, in the dusk, all that Curly saw was that the fellow was wearing a St. Jim's cap.

"Help!" he shouted.

"What the thump's happening here?" came a roaring voice.

It was the voice of Grundy, of the Shell.

Luke Crow turned his head, with an exclamation. The big, rugged Shell fellow hurried up and planted himself squarely in front of the man.

"My hat!" exclaimed George Alfred Grundy. "It's young D'Arcy!"

Grundy was generally admitted to be one of the biggest duffers in the school. But he was a hefty fellow, and he had heaps of pluck. In another moment he had jumped forward, his big fists clenched.

"Let go that kid!" roared Grundy, in ferocious tones.

"I won't!" answered Luke Crow, with a savage scowl.

"I tells yer—"

He got no further. Grundy was not waiting to argue. His right fist shot out and landed square on the man's bristly chin. Luke Crow gave a choking howl and went toppling backwards into the deep drift from which Curly had just scrambled.

"Yooooop!"

There was a yell of delight from the two Third-Formers. Grundy might be an ass in many ways, and he was certainly not very popular with the Third—the great George Alfred considered himself rather a lofty personage and possessed what he called a "short-way" with fags! But there was no doubt that on this occasion he was showing up in a good light.

"Good old Grundy!" gasped Curly.

Grundy stood over the prone figure of the poacher and glared down at him.

"Want any more?" he roared.

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The man scrambled up. He had lost his cudgel in the snow, and that blow to the jaw had shaken him badly. Though he was taller than the big Shell fellow, he eyed Grundy's broad shoulders, muscular arms, and big fists with a very doubtful eye.

"If you want me to wallop you," boomed Grundy, "just say the word!"

There was an evil look in Luke Crow's eyes, and for a moment it seemed as though he meant to take Grundy at his word. Had he cared to try, he could no doubt have made Grundy eat his words soon enough. But Luke Crow did not care to try! That blow had jolted him severely, and he was not anxious to sample any more. With a muttered oath, he turned abruptly and slunk away, vanishing into the falling snow.

"Lucky for him!" said Grundy, with a snort. "I'd have walloped him till he didn't know whether he was on his head or his heels!"

"My hat! It was great the way you biffed him on the jaw!" panted Wally.

The great George Alfred shrugged his shoulders.

"That was nothing, kid. I'd take on any chap his size—twice his size, in fact!"

Grundy's chest swelled in a warlike way at the thought.

"Thanks awfully, you know," said Wally. "I'd have been half killed if you hadn't turned up!"

"Of course you would," agreed Grundy. "Well, you kids had better scoot back to the school quick!"

"We will!" said Curly gratefully. "Come on, Wally, old chap. How are you feeling now?"

"A bit sore," grinned Wally. "Nothing much. Ta-ta, Grundy! Thanks awfully! It was jolly decent of you."

"Don't you worry about that," said Grundy grandly.

"You know, old Grundy's not half a bad sort, really," said Wally thoughtfully, when they were out of earshot.

"Who'd have thought of him turning up trumps like that? If it had been Tom Merry—"

"No, Grundy's all right," agreed Curly heartily.

For once, George Alfred Grundy was a hero! When he arrived back at the school some time later, having



completed his business in Rylcombe—the fetching of a pair of boots from the cobbler's—it was to find a large crowd of fags gathered in the hall of the School House. Grundy, knocking snow off his coat and cap, was surprised to hear a sudden lusty cheer.

The next moment he realised that the cheer was for him. The sight of Wally D'Arcy and Curly Gibson in the crowd made that fact evident!

"Hurrah for Grundy!" howled Wally.

"Good old Grundy!" yelled Reggie Manners.

Evidently the story of how he had rescued the fags from Luke Crow had been spread already through the Third, and the Third was not slow to show its appreciation.

Grundy grinned, not ill-pleased by any means.

With something of a swagger, the great George Alfred strode past the group of fags towards the stairs, bestowing a gracious nod upon them as he passed, by way of recognition of their applause. Their cheers were still ringing in his ears as he mounted to the Shell passage.

There was no doubt but that George Alfred was the hero of the hour!

CHAPTER 5.

Arthur Augustus is Alarmed!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY sailed gracefully along the Shell passage in the direction of Study No. 3.

He was on his way to visit Grundy.

The swell of St. Jim's had learnt from his minor of the part that Grundy had played in the affair in the lane; and to Arthur Augustus, who kept a very fatherly eye on his minor at St. Jim's, anyone who had done Wally a good turn had done him a good turn, too. It was a family matter. And so now Arthur Augustus was on his way to tender the thanks of the D'Arcys to George Alfred Grundy.

Outside the door of Study No. 3 Arthur Augustus halted and reached out a hand to open the door. Then a voice hailed him. It was the voice of Tom Merry.

"Hallo, Gussy!"





A dark figure loomed up in the doorway of the shop and stepped out. Whizz, whizz! There was a yell from the victim as two snowballs plastered themselves lovingly over his face. But the next moment Wally D'Arcy and Curly Gibson gave gasps of consternation as they realised that they had snowballed the wrong man! (See Chapter 3.)

The captain of the Shell was coming down the passage, and he paused at D'Arcy's side. Arthur Augustus nodded. "Hallo, deah boy! I am just visitin' Gwunday. He has shown most remarkable pluck and bwavey in knockin' down a howwied scoundwel who was thwashin' Wally, my minah, and—"

Arthur Augustus broke off abruptly, and Tom Merry jumped. Startled looks sprang into their faces.

From within Grundy's study a sepulchral groan had issued. "What the thump—"

Then the voice of Grundy came to their ears—a voice that seemed to be stricken with ghastly terror:

"The ghost! The ghost monk of St. Jim's! Help! Help!"

Arthur Augustus gave a stifled exclamation as those startling words rang out within Study No. 3.

"Gweat Scott!"

Again the voice could be heard.

"The ghost monk! Save me—save me! See it, gliding on its ghostly way! An apparition from another world, come to haunt me for my crimes! A-a-a-a-h!"

The words ended with a long-drawn moan.

Both Tom Merry and the swell of St. Jim's stood as if rooted to the spot, too dumbfounded to move.

From the sounds that were issuing from within the study, and Grundy's strange words, it seemed as though the ghostly monk of the school legend had put in another appearance. First, Trimble had declared most positively that he had seen it; now Grundy was stricken with terror, as if at a similar spectral apparition. The face of Arthur Augustus had gone rather pale as he stared in startled amazement at the study door before him.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "D-d-did you heah that, Tom Mewwy?"

Again there was a horrible groan from within the study—apparently from the ghostly monk.

"What the dickens—" gasped Tom Merry, and sprang into action. He flung open the door and dashed into the study, with the swell of St. Jim's on his heels.

If they hoped to catch a glimpse of the famous ghost they were disappointed. George Alfred Grundy was there right enough; but the ghost, if it had been there at all, had now vanished utterly.

Grundy was standing in the middle of the floor. He had pushed the table up against the wall, and was in the centre of the big clear space thus made. In one hand he clutched a number of sheets of foolscap. The other hand was clutched to his head. His hair was wildly dishevelled, and he was looking very red and warm. He started violently at Tom's abrupt entry.

"What on earth—" began Tom breathlessly.

"Have you seen the ghost, too, Gwunday?" cried Arthur Augustus excitedly.

Grundy stared at him.

"Eh?"

"The ghost, deah boy!" stuttered Arthur Augustus, with great excitement. "Have you seen the ghost—the ghost monk that Twimble said he saw?"

Grundy stared at the swell of St. Jim's speechlessly. Then suddenly he broke into a wild yell of laughter, and the sheets of foolscap fell from his fingers. He doubled up, his rugged face contorted with mirth, his bellowing guffaws echoing through the study.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Gwunday, deah boy, contwol yourself!"

But Grundy could not control himself. He was helpless. Arthur Augustus began to look really alarmed.

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"Gweat Scott! Gwunday thinks he has seen the ghost, and is hystewical from fwight!" he gasped, turning to Tom Merry.

The captain of the Shell had picked up the sheets of paper that Grundy had let fall. As he glanced at them he suddenly understood.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was Tom Merry this time. Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed in horror. "Tom Mewwy, contwol yourself! There is nothin' to get hysterical over, I assuah you! There is no need for you to give way in this dweadful mannah! There are no such things as ghosts weally!"

But Tom was shrieking with laughter almost as loudly as Grundy.

There was a step in the doorway.

"What's all the giddy rumpus?"

Manners and Lowther of the Shell were staring into the study, with puzzled looks on their faces. A few moments later Jack Blake of the Fourth, and Herries and Digby appeared, too. They had been on their way to visit Tom Merry in Study No. 10, when the sounds of merriment from Study No. 3 had drawn their attention.

Arthur Augustus glanced round helplessly.

"I—I can't undahstand it, deah boys!" stuttered the swell of St. Jim's. "Appawvently Gwunday thinks he has seen the ghost monk, and is hystewical with feah! His hystewiah has spweed to Tom Mewwy! It is dweadful! I cannot undahstand why Tom Mewwy, of all chaps, should give way to hystewiah in this extwordinawy mannah!"

"The—ghost monk?" cried Manners.

"Rats!" ejaculated Blake.

"Of course, it is all wot, I know," nodded Arthur Augustus. "But Gwunday was tewwified! We heard him yellin' and seweamin' in his studay, uttably tewwor-stwicken—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Grundy.

Tom Merry straightened himself with an effort and wiped his streaming eyes. Grundy dropped into a chair and lay there, breathless and grinning.

"You'll be the death of me yet, Gassy!" gasped Tom.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I—"

"Take a look at this, old chap!" grinned Tom, and held up Grundy's sheets of foolscap, covered with the weird scrawl that the great George Alfred passed for writing.

Very bewildered, Arthur Augustus took the sheaf of papers and glanced at them wonderingly. Then he jumped.

"Gweat Scott!"

At the top of one of the sheets was scrawled, "Enter the Ghost Monk." Then followed the words that had come to the ears of Tom and Arthur Augustus through the closed door of Study No. 3.

Clearly, it was a play that Grundy was writing! And he had been rehearsing his efforts aloud in the solitude of his study with such realistic vigour that he had convinced Arthur Augustus, and for a few moments even Tom Merry, of his abject terror at the sight of a purely imaginary spectre!

With deep disgust Arthur Augustus banged the play down on the table.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Manners and Lowther and Blake, Herries and Digby, all realised now what had happened, and they joined in with a fresh yell of laughter. Arthur Augustus eyed them icily through his monocle.

"I see no cause whatever for laughtah, you duffahs!" sniffed the swell of St. Jim's.

"Ha, ha, ha!" grinned Lowther. "We do!"

Grundy jumped to his feet, and collected his precious papers.

"Well, if it sounded as natural as that," he said thoughtfully, "it must be pretty good stuff! That's ripping!"

"You really mean you're writing a play, Grundy?" chorled Herries.

"I am," nodded George Alfred Grundy.

"Oh, my hat!"

"What are you grinning at?" demanded Grundy.

"Oh, nothing!" said Herries hastily.

Grundy snorted.

"It's going to be the hit of the term, my play," he went on with great satisfaction. "It'll knock the chaps, absolutely!"

"Knock 'em silly, I dare say!" nodded Manners gravely.

"Rather!" grinned Grundy unsuspectingly. "Mind you, I don't mean to say it's as good as Shakespeare—"

"Oh, you don't say that?" murmured Digby.

"No, I don't say that," continued Grundy. "But it's

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jolly nearly as good. It's top-notch! I don't like to blow my own trumpet—"

"My hat!" breathed Monty Lowther.

"What's that?" demanded Grundy.

"Nothing," said Lowther hastily.

"All I want is some chaps to help me produce the thing," went on Grundy. "Of course, I shall take the principal part myself. But I want some chaps to take other parts. Wilkins and Gunn tried to be funny about the blessed play, so I walloped them, and they say now they won't back me up. So I need some other chaps. In fact, I'd thought of asking you fellows, as it happens!"

"Thanks awfully!" exclaimed Herries gravely.

"Not at all! Of course, you chaps will show up rather poorly beside me; but then, most plays have one outstanding actor in 'em."

"Of course," said Manners, with deep sarcasm.

"Good! So long as you understand that, it's all right."

My idea is to produce the play a few nights before we break up for Christmas. We'll start rehearsing at once."

"We?" queried Blake.

"Rather! You chaps agree to act in it, don't you?"

The "chaps" looked at one another. Then they looked at George Alfred Grundy. Then, as one man, they all shook their heads.

"Sorry!" said Blake.

"Can't be did!" explained Monty Lowther.

"We—er—think we should only let you down, you see," put in Digby brightly.

Grundy glared at them.

"You mean to say you won't take the chance of acting in my play?" he roared.

"Just what we do mean, I'm afraid," said Tom Merry, grinning. "You see, Grundy, old man—"

"Weally, you see, deah boy, your play is bound to be such awful wot—" began Arthur Augustus tactlessly.

"What?" howled Grundy.

Arthur Augustus suddenly remembered the reason that had brought him to Grundy's study. He approached the great George Alfred and held out his hand.

"Gwunday, deah boy, I have come to thank you for the weally wippin' way in which you wescued my minah from that wottah, Luke Cwow!" he said graciously. "It was a vewy pluckay act on your part, Gwunday. I considah that you have done not only a gweat favah to my minah, but to me as well."

"Think so?" said Grundy loftily.

"Yaas! I weally do think so. In fact, I should like to weturn the favah you have wendered in some way."

"You would, eh?" said Grundy thoughtfully.

"Yaas, wathah!" Arthur Augustus nodded eagerly. "If there is any way in which I can do you a favah, Gwunday, I shall be only too pleased."

"Is that a promise?" demanded Grundy.

"Yaas, bai Jove!"

"Good! You can do me a favour. I want chaps to act in my play, and most of the chaps at St. Jim's are a lot of blessed asses! You and your pals aren't quite such asses as most—"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Gwunday—"

"Not such asses as most," repeated Grundy, with a sniff.

"You've said you'll do me a favour, Gassy. Well, here it is. I want you to act in my play, and persuade the rest of your crowd to act in it, too!"

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stared at Grundy of the Shell in dismay.



CHAPTER 6. Grundy's Play!



"OH deah!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Well?" boomed Grundy.

"Oh deah! I—I hadn't thought of your askin' anything like that, deah boy! I—"

"You promised!" snorted Grundy.

"Yaas," Arthur Augustus glanced at his chums miserably. "Oh deah! This is dweadful! Weally, Gwunday, I do not want to act in your play—"

"That shows you're an ass, then!" roared Grundy.

"And what about your blessed promise, anyway?"

"I—I suppose I shall have to do as you wewest, Gwunday," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I gave





you my promise to do you any favah you might ask, and I shall not wetwact it, of course. Considah it settled!"

"You will?" cried Grundy.

"Yaas!"

"And you'll make the other chaps?"

"Yaas!"

"Oh, will you?" roared Herries. "What about us? Don't we have anything to say? Catch me acting in Grundy's blessed play!"

Arthur Augustus began to turn back his sleeves in a very businesslike way. Herries backed hastily.

"Here, hands off!" he exclaimed.

"You agree to act in Gwunday's play?" inquired the swell of St. Jim's calmly.

"Rats! I— Ow! Yaroooooop!"

Herries gave a yell as Arthur Augustus planted a fist on his nose. He sat down on the carpet very suddenly. There was a yell of laughter from Tom Merry & Co.

Herries scrambled up, red and wrathful.

"You silly jabberwock!" he roared excitedly. "I'll smash you! I'll teach you to biff me on the nose!"

He rushed at Arthur Augustus, with wildly waving fists. Biff!

Herries sat down again, before another hefty punch on the nose. This time he did not rise so quickly.

"Are you goin' to act in Gwunday's play, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus.

Herries rose painfully. He had found the floor rather hard.

"Ow! No!"

Arthur Augustus raised his fists again and advanced upon his chum. Herries dodged.

"Ow! You silly lunatic! Pax! I'll act in Grundy's blessed play, if you're really so keen on it!"

"You, Blake?"

"Oh, count me in!" said Blake hastily, grinning.

"Same here!" chuckled Digby.

Arthur Augustus turned to Tom Merry & Co.

"Right you are, Gussy, I'll be in it!" laughed Tom Merry.

"I'd do more than that to oblige you, Gussy, old top!"

"Same here!" grinned Manners and Monty Lowther.

"Good!" nodded Arthur Augustus, with a beaming smile. He turned to Grundy. "Wight you are, Gwunday. We will all act in your play, deah boy."

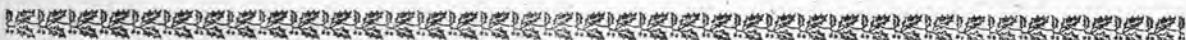
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good men!" exclaimed Grundy, with satisfaction.

"Now, if you'll keep quiet, I'll read you the play right away. It's terrifically thrilling!"

The grinning juniors grouped themselves round the study.

(Continued on next page.)



Have you consulted the Oracle, chums? His head has become so swollen with knowledge that it grows through his thatch!

Q. What is a ptarmigan?

A. This, Albert Thorby, of Preston, is a bird not unlike a grouse in appearance. It lives in such widely different places of the northern hemisphere as Scotland,



The wonder of Nature—this bird, the ptarmigan, of northern countries, changes its summer coat of brown to a winter coat of white with the changing of the seasons.

Northern Asia, and Canada. In one respect it is a very remarkable bird for in the winter it changes its brown plumage to an absolutely pure white, a garb which renders it almost invisible in the snow.

Q. Who was Zero?

A. I have printed above the exact question sent to me by Solomon minor of the Second Form of St. M—'s School. I am afraid, my young friend, that you hardly show the mental qualities which so distinguished your illustrious namesake of the Old Testament. Another question in your letter only makes matters worse: "Was he not the chap who played the piccolo while Rome was flooded by the

River Tigris?" He was *not*, Solomon minor! You are doubtless thinking of the Roman emperor, Nero, who fiddled while Rome burned. And by the way, Rome is on the River Tiber, which is not given to floods as is the great River Tigris which flows through Mesopotamia. Zero means the figure 0—no quantity. I am afraid, Solomon minor, I can't sympathise with you because your Form-master has placed you at a desk within too easy reach of the cane!

Q. What is a gaff?

A. A long spear with a curved steel hook near the end of it used for the landing of large fish such as the salmon.

Q. What is a bashaw?

A. A friend of Tony Metcalf, a London boy, has told him this is another name for boxer or "pug." Believe him not, Tony! Bashaw is the old form of the word pasha, which is the name for a Turkish officer of rank such as a military commander or a governor of a province.

Q. Who are the Basques?

A. A race of people who live along both sides of the Western Pyrenees which divide France from Spain.

Q. What is an entr'acte?

A. A fair reader, Binnie Lawford, states that she saw this on a theatre programme and wants to know what language this is and what it means. It is a French term, Binnie, and simply signifies the period between the acts of a play—in short, as Mr. Micawber would say—the interval.

Q. What can you fill a barrel with to make it lighter?

A. Holes.

Q. What is a marsupial?

A. By this is meant any animal of the sort which has a pouch in which to carry its young. The best-known marsupials are the kangaroo and opossum.

Q. Where is Woolloomooloo?

A. Ah, chum, Eric Nosworthy, heard this name in a comic song, and wants to know if there really is such a place. I can assure you there is, Eric, and on the best of authority, too, because I've been there. It is one of the numerous districts of Sydney, N.S.W., fronting on the famous Port Jackson harbour. Built into Woolloomooloo Bay are the large Domain swimming baths, a favourite resort of those Sydneysites who prefer smooth water to the surf of the beaches. Swimming in the harbour itself is not safe, owing to the numerous sharks.

Q. What is a kip?

A. There are two meanings to this word, William Lockyer, of Barnsley. It can mean the hide of any young or small animal which is used for leather. Also it is the slang term for a cheap lodging-house, a bed, or a sleep.



Spatter-dashes, or long gaiters worn by soldiers of bygone days.

Q. What are spatter-dashes?

A. These are a bit out of fashion now, Donald McM. The term was applied to the thin gaiters worn in the old days to keep the legs from becoming bespattered by mud or water. Similar things were used by some of the old-time English regiments. Some men still wear the smaller variety called spats, but even these are not so much used as formerly.





The door had been closed, and Grundy sorted out his sheets of paper. There seemed to be hundreds of them.

It was partly to oblige Gussy and partly to please themselves that Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. had agreed to act in Grundy's play. It would be good fun to act in a Christmas performance. They knew that Piggins & Co., of the New House, had decided to perform "Macbeth" at the end of the term. They guessed that Grundy's play would be far better fun than "Macbeth"! Grundy himself, no doubt, imagined that it would be a thrilling melodrama—that was clear from the little they already knew of the play. But everyone else would regard the play as a screaming farce, and it would probably be a great success as such—if they knew Grundy!

"Get it off your chest, old boss," murmured Manners.

"What's it going to be called?" asked Tom Merry, laughing.

Grundy cleared his throat impressively.

"The Grim Ghost of Grimly College; or, Haunted Until Horrified!" he announced.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a great yell of laughter in Study No. 3. Grundy glared round at the circle of juniors.

"What's funny about that?" he roared. "That's not funny—it's thrilling! Frightfully thrilling!"

"Sorry—our mistake!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Look here, Lowther, you ass—"

"Carry on, old man!" said Lowther hastily. "It's a great title! Let's hear some more."

Rather mollified, the great George Alfred rustled his sheets of foolscap.

"I'll tell you what the scenes are first," he went on. "The first scene is in the haunted library at Grimly College. The second is in the haunted study. The third is the haunted crypt. The fourth scene is a room in the haunted tower. The fifth—"

"Half a jiff!" objected Digby. "They can't all be haunted!"

"Why not?" roared Grundy.

"Well, dash it all, old man—"

"I tell you, they are haunted!" snorted Grundy. "All of 'em! Grimly College is a fearful, sinister, lonely building in a bleak corner of a ghostly moor, and the whole blessed place is pretty well haunted. See?"

"Oh, all right, then," murmured Digby.

"Cawwy on, Gwunday, deah boy," murmured Arthur Augustus encouragingly. "What's the next scene? The haunted what?"

"The next scene isn't a haunted anything, you ass!" sniffed Grundy. "It's a secret room that opens from Study No. 13 of the Shell passage at Grimly College. The sixth scene is the haunted gymnasium. The seventh scene—"

"How many scenes are there, Grundy?" inquired Tom Merry anxiously.

"Only nine. The seventh scene is the—"

"The haunted tuckshop?" suggested Blake brightly.

"No, it jolly well isn't!" growled Grundy. "Don't interrupt with silly suggestions! This seventh scene is the best scene in the whole play. It takes place in the haunted Form-room. I got the idea of the play from that ass Trimble saying he had seen the ghost monk."

"I see," said Tom Merry. "Carry on!"

"Well, the ghostly monk appears to the scoundrel who's impersonating the imprisoned headmaster, and the bogus Head gets such frightful wind up that he confesses his crime and admits that the real Dr. Dainwright—"

"Dr. Drainpipe?" exclaimed Monty Lowther, in surprise.

"Dr. Dainwright, fathead!"

"Sorry! Thought you said Drainpipe," apologised Lowther.

"The scoundrel confesses that the real Dr. Drainpipe—I mean, Dainwright—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stop cackling!" howled Grundy. "Lowther put me off! Well, the scoundrel confesses that the real Dr. Dainwright has been lying imprisoned in the boot-room for three weeks!"

"The haunted boot-room, I suppose?" put in Blake gravely.

"No! The ordinary blessed boot-room!" roared Grundy.

"If you're trying to be funny, Blake—"

"Funny?" exclaimed Blake innocently. "Oh, no!"

"Then there's a scene in the boot-room," went on Grundy, growling, "and the last scene is in the Big Hall of Grimly College, where the hero gets rewarded with a cheque for a thousand pounds and a tuck-hammer by the true headmaster, in the presence of the whole school."

"Good!" grinned Herries.

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"Well, tell us the plot of the play first," suggested Tom Merry. "Then we shall know where we are."

"Certainly," said Grundy. "The idea is that there's a rascally prefect at Grimly College—a chap something like Knox. His name is Jasper Fox. He's got an uncle who's about as big a rotter as himself, and between 'em they kidnap the real headmaster, Dr. Drainpipe—I mean, Dainwright—and imprison him in the boot-room. They also kidnap the captain of the school, Montgomery Grant. Then the uncle, who's amazingly like the Head to look at, impersonates him, and Jasper Fox bags Montgomery Grant's place as captain of the school."

"Naughty Jasper!" murmured Manners.

"Well, a giddy reign of terror starts then," went on Grundy impressively. "The bogus Head and his rascally nephew flog chaps every day, till they're jolly well black and blue! And the bogus Head cuts down the supply of grub to the chaps, so that some of 'em nearly die of starvation. It begins to seem as if nothing can save the chaps from the tyrants! George Alfred Munday, the hero, a fine chap—"

"Did you say George Alfred Munday, or George Alfred Grundy?" interjected Herries.

"Munday!" replied Grundy firmly. "This chap Munday is in despair. Then a strange and thrilling thing happens. The legendary monk's ghost appears! It appears first to Jasper Fox in the haunted crypt, to which he has dragged a wretched fag to torture him with red-hot irons! After that, whenever the villains are up to their rotten tricks, the ghost turns up and scares 'em to death! Finally, the bogus Head in his ghastly terror owns up to everything. The real Head is released from the boot-room, where he's been three weeks, faint with hunger—"

"I bet he was hungry all right, after three weeks in the boot-room," murmured Manners softly.

"Shut up!" glared Grundy. "He's released, and has a good feed. So does the captain of the school, Montgomery Grant, who's been a prisoner all the time in the old cowshed."

"Poor old Montgomery!" sighed Monty Lowther. "What happens then, Grundy?"

"Why, the whole secret comes out!" cried Grundy, getting really excited. "It is a tremendous surprise, of course, for the audience. What do you think? It turns out that it isn't a real ghost at all! At the time it's been this chap Munday, dressed up as a ghost! He's saved the school!"

Grundy finished with a triumphant grin as he stared from face to face. Tom Merry assumed an expression of wondering amazement.

"This chap Munday?" he gasped.

"Rather!" chuckled Grundy. "It was him all the time!"

"All the time?" breathed Blake.

"All the blessed time," Grundy assured him.

"My only Aunt Sempronia!" exclaimed Manners.

"Amazing!"

"Astounding!" agreed Monty Lowther.

"Simply flabbergasting!" gasped Herries.

George Alfred Grundy grinned, well pleased.

"Now I'll read it all to you!" said George Alfred Grundy.

"Oh deah!"

"Did you speak, Gussy?" inquired Grundy.

"Nunno, deah boy!"

And with a faint sigh Arthur Augustus D'Arcy composed himself in his chair to hear the ten acts of "The Grim Ghost of Grimly College; or, Haunted Until Horrified!"

The swell of St. Jim's was beginning to feel that in his eagerness to return the favour that Grundy had rendered he had let himself in for something, indeed!



CHAPTER 7 Grundy Sees It!



GRUNDY of the Shell turned over restlessly in bed and grunted.

George Alfred could not sleep!

Thoughts of his play filled his mind, chased one another round his brain, and would not allow sleep to come. Scene by scene Grundy was going over his masterpiece in his mind.

"It's great stuff!" he told himself.

It was well past midnight, he knew, when a sudden brilliant idea for his play struck him.

Grundy sat up in bed. He knew that unless he jotted down his idea at once he might forget it by morning.





"Let go that kid!" roared George Alfred Grundy, planting himself squarely in front of the ruffian who was grasping Wally D'Arcy's coat. "I won't!" answered the man, with a savage scowl. "I tells yer——" He broke off with a howl as Grundy's fist landed square on his bristly chin. "Yoooooop!" (See Chapter 4.)

He groped for his jacket on the chair, and took a pencil and a sheet of paper from his pocket. Then he slipped out of bed and moved to the window. Bright moonlight was streaming in through the panes, sufficient for him to write by as he jotted down his brain-wave.

Grundy made a few hurried notes, shivered, and turned to jump back into bed again. But before doing so he glanced out of the window. Snow was still falling, though only lightly now. Misty moonlight glimmered outside, and the smooth snow on the roofs and the churned snow in the quad glittered brightly.

Then suddenly Grundy gave a gasp. He rubbed his eyes and looked again. His mouth fell open, and his eyes took on a fixed stare.

For a gliding figure could be seen under the snow-laden elms, in the dark shadows—a white, cowed figure, that seemed to drift in ghostly fashion between the trees.

"The ghost monk!" gasped Grundy. "So it's real! Trimble didn't just dream it! Oh crumbs!"

He could still see the shadowy apparition of the monk out there among the elms. Grundy felt his breath coming in deep gasps. He could stand it no longer. He gave a great yell, and the next moment the whole of the Shell dormitory was awake and sitting up in bed.

"What's up?" cried the voice of Tom Merry.

"Grundy!" exclaimed Talbot, recognising the figure by the window.

"The ghost!" panted Grundy. "The white monk! I—I've seen it! Look, there it is!"

His voice was high-pitched with excitement and fright. Grundy was no coward; but the sight of a ghostly monk in the quad was too much even for him. His hair seemed to be standing up on his scalp as he stared down with wide, fascinated eyes at the spectral shape amid the trees.

"The ghost monk?" ejaculated Glyn. "Rats!"

But in another moment the Shell fellows were scrambling excitedly out of their beds and racing to the windows.

"Where?" scoffed Racke, peering out. "There's nothing out there, Grundy, you ass!"

"Trying to pull our legs, you idiot, I suppose?" snorted

Kangaroo. "Just because Trimble said he saw the blessed ghost——"

"It's gone now," muttered Grundy breathlessly. "It—it was among the trees there! I saw it!"

"B-r-r-r!"

"The silly ass!"

"Trying to pull our legs!"

Grundy stared out excitedly. But it was true that the "ghost" had vanished now—vanished utterly. Grundy breathed a deep sigh of relief.

"I tell you I saw it, you idiots!" he exclaimed, his voice thrilling with excitement. "A white figure, like a monk——"

"Rats!" snorted Gore.

The Shell did not believe for a moment that Grundy had really seen the apparition. They believed that it had been a jape on his part. And they resented being awakened in the middle of the night, and brought from their warm beds, for the sake of amusing George Alfred Grundy.

Grundy, still standing half-dazed by the window, did not realise the feeling in the dormitory that his midnight disturbance had aroused, but it was soon brought home to him.

"Collar him!" yelled Crooke.

The next moment Grundy was collared and swung off his feet.

"Leggo!" he panted.

"We'll teach you to haul us out of bed in the middle of the night with your funny business!" exclaimed Clifton Dane hotly.

"Bump him!"

Grundy struggled, but in vain. He was helpless in the grasp of his irritated Form-fellows. They raised him like a feather, and dropped him like a sack of coals!

Bump!

"Yaroooooop!"

Bump!

"Oweh! Yooooop! Leggo! Oh crumbs——"

And then a sudden stern voice broke in from the doorway. In another instant the Shell dormitory was flooded with electric light as a tall figure by the doorway snapped on

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the switch. The juniors turned with a gasp, and the unhappy Grundy scrambled to his feet as he was hastily released.

Standing in the doorway was Mr. Railton, his eyes fixed upon the group of pyjama-clad juniors with a gimlet-like look.

"What is the meaning of this?" rapped out the Housemaster in icy tones.

"Oh crumbs!" groaned George Alfred Grundy.



CHAPTER 8. The Ghost of St. Jim's!



"WHAT does this outrageous behaviour mean?"

"N-nothing, sir!" mumbled Monty Lowther, who happened to be nearest to the doorway.

"Nothing?" echoed Mr. Railton in terrible tones.

"That is—ahem—you see, sir—" stammered Lowther hastily.

Then Grundy found his voice. Grundy was always ready to rush in where angels feared to tread.

"I've seen the ghost, sir!" he burst out excitedly. "I woke the chaps up when I saw it, sir! It was out in the quad. The chaps didn't see it, though—it had vanished! So they thought I was pulling their legs, sir, and—and—"

Grundy broke off awkwardly. He was in great danger of putting his foot into it, he realised.

"The ghost!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "What ghost?"

"Why, the monk, sir, that's said to haunt the school when there's snow on the ground, sir!" boomed Grundy eagerly. "Trimble of the Fourth saw it last night, sir—now I've seen it to-night!"

Mr. Railton looked at Grundy very searchingly. That Grundy was speaking the truth was obvious from the excitement in his face.

"This is very strange, Grundy," said the Housemaster at last. "You are sure of what you say?"

"Oh, rather, sir!"

"But no one else saw it?" went on Mr. Railton.

"No, we didn't see it, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Perhaps you were dreaming, Grundy?"

"It wasn't a dream, sir," said Grundy positively. "It was jolly well real! I was pretty scared, sir."

"Where exactly did you see it, or think you saw it?" inquired Mr. Railton, with a frown.

"Under the elms, sir. I'll show you!" cried Grundy excitedly.

He crossed to the window, followed by Mr. Railton. The Shell fellows stared at one another. Even Grundy would not be mad enough to try and jape a Housemaster, so his story must have been true!

"My hat!" muttered Kangaroo. "Grundy really does think he saw the giddy spook, then! He must be off his chump—like that fat ass, Trimble!"

There was a thoughtful frown on Tom Merry's face as he stood watching Grundy and Mr. Railton. It was a strange coincidence, at least, that Trimble and Grundy both affirmed that they had seen the same apparition on two successive nights.

Mr. Railton peered down through the window.

"It was just under that fourth tree there, sir, that I spotted it at first," explained Grundy eagerly. "It was gliding along towards the chapel, and— Oh, my hat!"

He broke off with a startled gasp. There was a sharp exclamation from the Housemaster.

"There it is, sir!" howled Grundy. "Do you see it?"

In an instant there was a rush to the long windows.

Tom Merry, Manners, Monty Lowther, and Talbot, crowding for a view at one of the windows, each gave an almost simultaneous cry.

Under the trees, in the dim shadows, a ghostly, monkish figure could be seen moving slowly over the snow.

"The ghost of St. Jim's!" panted Lowther, and his voice was hoarse.

From farther down the dormitory, by one of the other windows, there was a frightened scream. Skimpole had fainted, and Bernard Glyn had only just caught him in his arms in time to prevent him from falling.

A deathly silence followed the nerve-shaking scream. All eyes were riveted in dumbfounded amazement on the shadowy, spectral figure in the old quad. It vanished again among the trees.

"Back to your beds, boys!"

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Mr. Railton rapped out the stern command, and the Shell fellows, many of them with white, scared faces, obeyed.

"This is some ridiculous practical joke!" said the Housemaster sternly. "There are, of course, no such things as ghosts. But there is, without doubt, a figure down there that bears a resemblance to the legendary monk that is said to—er—haunt the school. Clearly, some misguided person is deliberately impersonating the monk of the legend!"

Mr. Railton hurried across to Skimpole's bed. But already the freak of the Shell was recovering consciousness.

The door swung open, and Kildare of the Sixth entered the dormitory, clad in a dressing-gown. He started as he caught sight of Mr. Railton.

"I thought I heard a scream, sir."

"You did, Kildare."

Hastily Mr. Railton explained. Kildare's face went grim.

"We must try and catch him, sir."

"Fetch Darrell and Baker and Knox and North!" exclaimed the Housemaster rapidly. "Whoever it is out there, he must be caught. I only trust that he has not noticed the light in these windows." He turned to Skimpole.

"Are you all right?"

"Yes, thank you, sir," said Skimpole. "I greatly regret that I succumbed to—"

But before the freak of the Shell could finish his sentence Mr. Railton had hurried from the dormitory, followed by Kildare.

"Who the dickens can it be out there?" breathed Manners. "Some silly ass trying to scare chaps, I suppose. My hat! What a risky jape to play!"

"Must be the same chap that Trimble saw," put in Dane.

"Of course," nodded Tom Merry.

Already several of the fellows were creeping from their beds across to the windows. But the door opened again, and Rushden of the Sixth appeared.

"What are you kids doing out of bed?" he rapped out. "Get back at once, and take a hundred lines each!"

Racke, Kangaroo, Monty Lowther, and Gunn returned to their beds.

"I shall be around outside here," said Rushden warningly, "so no more of this! You kids have got to get off to sleep. You'll know in the morning if that silly ass out there, who's dressed himself up as a monk, is caught or not."

"Blow Rushden!" muttered Monty Lowther disgustedly, when the Sixth-Former had withdrawn. "We're missing all the fun!"

"It's rotten!" agreed Clifton Dane.

But there was no help for it. Grumbling, the Shell fellows snuggled down under the blankets, and wondered, as they dropped off to sleep one after the other, just what exciting happenings were taking place out there in the snow.



CHAPTER 9. News for the New House!



NEXT morning the excitement at St. Jim's was intense.

The Shell fellows soon learnt that the mysterious midnight figure had not been seen again. Though

Mr. Railton and the Sixth-Formers had searched the quad thoroughly, they had found no trace of anyone, and the snow was so churned in that part of the school premises that they had had no footprints to guide them. If that strange and eerie figure had really been a daring japer, he had made good use of his time before the arrival of the searchers. Mr. Railton was convinced that the mysterious unknown had noticed the lights in the Shell dormitory, and the staring faces, and had been quick to make himself scarce.

None of the other dormitories had been awakened, and if the "ghost" had been a St. Jim's fellow, he had managed to return to his dormitory undetected by his fellows. A downstairs window, that was found to be open, seemed to make that solution of the problem possible, though Ephraim Taggles, the school porter, admitted, under questioning, that it was he who had carelessly left it open on the previous evening.

"It's an absolute giddy mystery!" exclaimed Tom Merry at breakfast.

But it was a mystery that thrilled St. Jim's.

Conversation that day was of little else. The question: "Who is the white monk?" was on all lips, from the Sixth to the Second. And Baggy Trimble, whose tale had been





The New House performance of "Macbeth" was very dull until, during the sleepwalking scene, the curtain was accidentally lowered in the middle of Lady Macbeth's stately passage. The audience roared when the curtain was hastily raised again and Lady Macbeth—alias Dick Redfern—was found busily punching Owen's head for the lapse! (See Chapter 11.)

so unexpectedly justified, went around with his fat little nose in the air, and took every opportunity of reminding people that he had been the first to see the strange figure.

"Well, it can't be any chap in the Shell or Fourth, it's clear," said Kerruish, the boy from the Isle of Man. "If it had been, it would have been spotted that he wasn't in bed last night or the night before."

"Unless it's a New House man," put in Manners quietly. "Probably it is," said Hammond. "It's just the sort of silly game a New House ass would play!"

"Well, he's got some nerve," grinned Aubrey Racke. During morning break, Tom Merry was discussing the mystery to Lowther and Manners and Blake & Co. at the top of the School House step, when Grundy came up.

"You know," said Grundy, beaming, "this is a jolly good advertisement for the play, isn't it? It'll make the chaps frightfully keen to see a play that's all about a giddy ghost!"

"I suppose it will," laughed Tom Merry.

"Of course it will!" chuckled Grundy. "By the way, don't forget the rehearsal to-night."

"Rather not!"

Grundy strode away, still grinning. Blake stared after him curiously.

"I suppose Grundy doesn't know anything about the blessed spook?" he murmured thoughtfully.

"Why on earth should he?" asked Digby, in surprise.

"Well, he might have got some chap to do it, as an

advertisement for his play, you know," said Blake. "Grundy's crazy enough about his blessed play for anything!"

There was still a thoughtful look on the face of Jack Blake as he and his chums made their way into Mr. Lathorn's class-room for second lesson.

That evening, in one of the box-rooms, the first rehearsal of Grundy's "potted Melodrama," as Monty Lowther humorously called it, took place.

Grundy had cast himself for the part of Munday, the gallant schoolboy hero—which part also included the impersonating of the Grimly College "ghost." Monty Lowther was given the important part of Jasper Fox, the scoundrelly prefect, and Tom Merry was awarded the doubtful honour of playing the part of Jasper Fox's villainous uncle, who in the play impersonated the headmaster. Dr. Dainwright, the real Head, was to be acted by Blake. Manners, Digby and Herries and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were all awarded parts, though of lesser importance.

And the schoolboy actors started to get acquainted with their parts with a will.

The box-room had been chiefly chosen in order to keep the affair secret, as the performance was to be kept a big surprise until nearer the day of the show. But the best

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laid plans of mice and men are liable to become upset!

Redfern of the New House, who chose that evening to visit Manners in order to discuss photography, wandered upstairs to the dark-room in search of him when he failed to find him in Study No. 10. The dark-room was next door to the box-room, where the rehearsal of "The Grim Ghost of Grimly College" was taking place, and Redfern halted in astonishment at the sound of George Alfred Grundy's stentorian voice.

It was only after he had listened for some minutes that the realisation of what was taking place in the box-room dawned upon him.

He returned excitedly to the New House and burst into Figgins & Co.'s study while its occupants were busy with their prep.

"I say," exclaimed Redfern breathlessly, "those School House wasters are doing a play for Christmas!"

Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn looked up from their books with fallen faces.

"Never mind!" said Kerr, with a shrug. "Our show will be better than theirs, I dare say."

"Rats!" grunted Redfern, sitting on the corner of the table. "Our blessed show! 'Macbeth'! Years out of date!"

"Well, if you don't want to play in it, don't!" sniffed Fatty Wynn. "We can get somebody else to play the part of Lady Macbeth!"

"What are the School House bounders doing, then?" demanded Figgins.

"A funny show," said Redfern disconsolately. "I happened to overhear them while they were rehearsing. It's a scream! I didn't stop to hear all of it. I heard a good bit, and it's an absolute scream! It's a skit on these spook plays, you know, like they have in London. Awfully funny! Grundy wrote it, I believe."

"That ass?" sniffed Fatty Wynn. "Never!"

"I tell you he did! Who'd have thought Grundy could write a funny play? I call it dashed clever of him, too, to hit on a topical idea like that of a ghost. After the St. Jim's ghost has been on the prowl, as it seems to have been, Grundy's play will be the hit of the term!"

Figgins & Co. looked thoroughly disconsolate. They had been prepared for Tom Merry & Co. to give a performance of "Hamlet" or "The Merchant of Venice."

"'Macbeth' will seem a bit stale," admitted Fatty Wynn. "But fancy Grundy, of all chaps—"

There was a tap on the door, and Monteith of the Sixth put his head in.

"Bedtime, you kids!"

Figgins & Co. went up to bed very thoughtfully. They did not at all relish the idea of having their performance of "Macbeth" overshadowed by a School House topical comedy!

As the juniors undressed, both in the New House and in the School House, many eager glances were cast from the dormitory windows at St. Jim's.

Would the mysterious "ghost" of the white monk appear again? The snow had stopped falling, and a bright moon was shining, and the snow lay in deep drifts in many corners of the quad. But of the white monk there was no sign.

"Don't suppose he'll show up again," said Figgins, as he climbed into bed. "He's been scared away now, whoever he was!"

But that was where Figgins of the Fourth was wrong.

**A
good
Xmas
yarn is
rare, but
one combin-
ing the season's
mirth with a
thrilling detective
mystery is a marvel.
The Union Jack,
always foremost, again
offers such a seasonable
Sexton Blake story. It is**

**out
at
2d
on
Thursday?
The Crime of the
Christmas
Tree**

of George Alfred Munday, in "The Grim Ghost of Grimly College." It was the following Saturday afternoon, and by that time anyone but Grundy would have known his lines perfectly. But Grundy, even though he was the author of that thrilling drama, was never quick to learn.

And so he was considerably annoyed at being interrupted by George Figgins of the New House and Kerr and Wynn.

"Well, ass?" growled Grundy, in his polite way.

"Ass yourself!" retorted Figgins. "I say, Grundy, I hear you've written a play!"

Grundy looked a trifle taken aback. As yet, the play was supposed still to be a secret.

"Yes," grunted Grundy suspiciously.

"How did you know?"

"A little bird told us!" chuckled Fatty Wynn.

"Congratters," said Figgins solemnly. "It's proved something, anyway!"

"What's that?" demanded Grundy.

"Why, that your skull isn't quite empty, after all, as everyone has always said," replied Figgins blandly.

"Why, you—you—" stuttered Grundy.

"Chuck it, Figgy, you ass!" exclaimed Kerr quickly. The New House trio had approached Grundy with the idea of pumping him concerning his play, and they were not likely to learn much if they annoyed the great George Alfred. "I say, Grundy, I hear your play's a scream!"

Grundy jumped.

"A—a scream?" howled Grundy.

"Yes," nodded David Llewellyn Wynn. "A regular shriek, from beginning to end. I never thought you had the brains to write a funny play, you know—that is—ahem—"

"Why, you fat cuckoo!" roared Grundy.

Grundy considered that his play was about the most thrilling drama that had ever been written. He could not imagine that to anyone else it could appear otherwise. He had not the faintest idea that to Tom Merry & Co., and to everyone else for that matter when the play was presented to them, it appeared as a screamingly funny performance! Therefore, congratulations on its humorousness were a little out of place and very annoying to George Alfred Grundy.

"Who are you calling a cuckoo?" snorted Fatty Wynn. "All I said was that your play was jolly funny. Dash it, that's a compliment, ain't it, to a chap that's written a funny play?"

"I haven't written a funny play!" shrieked Grundy. "It's a thrilling, hair-raising drama!"

"Oh!"

The New House trio stared at Grundy blankly.

"It's serious!" boomed George Alfred, glaring.

"S-s-s-s-serious?" gasped Figgins. "But Redfern heard a lot of it and said it was a scream."

"Redfern said that?" roared Grundy. "The—the cheeky ass! I'll wallop him!"

"I asked Herries about it, and he said it was a scream, too," nodded Fatty Wynn. "He said it was going to be the hit of the Christmas term."

"Herries said that?" gasped Grundy. "Rats! He was pulling your leg, you fat chump!"

"Manners said so, too," went on Fatty Wynn. "He said it was a frightfully funny show."

Grundy stared at the Falstaff of the New House. It was impossible for him to realise that anyone could have said that about his thrilling melodrama. He gave an angry snort.

"Manners can't have said that," he declared. "Why, you fat fibber—"

"Fibber, am I?" cried David Llewellyn Wynn. "My hat! Take that, you rotter!"

And the next moment Fatty Wynn's fist had landed, hard, on Grundy's nose.

"Yow!"

Grundy gave a howl. Then he clenched his big fists and jumped forward. It was Fatty Wynn's turn to howl, as one of Grundy's hefty punches crashed into his chest. Fatty Wynn sat down in the snow, gasping, and Grundy stood over him, brandishing his fists.

"Get up and have some more!" roared Grundy.

CHAPTER 10.

School House v. New House!

"HALLO, Grundy!"

It was the voice of Figgins. Grundy turned with a majestic frown.

The great man of the Shell was pacing to and fro under the snow-laden elms in the quad, murmuring basily to himself. He was going over his lines for the part

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"Ow!" panted David Llewellyn Wynn. "Groooh!"

But Grundy had taken on dangerous odds. The other two of the New House trio were not going to stand idly by while Grundy slogged their chum. Figgins and Kerr made a rush, and Grundy was collared and rolled in the snow.

He found himself lying on his back, with Fatty Wynn seated, grinning, on his chest, whilst Figgins scooped up a large handful of snow and turned, with a chuckle, towards the helpless School House playwright.

"If you rub that in my face—" roared Grundy in alarm.

"He must be a thought-reader!" grinned Figgins.

"Oh crumbs! You New House rotter! I'll smash—Ow! Oh! Yarooop! Grooooooh!"

Grundy gasped and spluttered as the New House leader cheerily began to rub the snow over his face.

"That'll teach you not to call a New House chap a fibber," said Figgins severely.

And then there was a sudden shout from among the trees.

"My hat! Look! Figgins & Co.! And they've got Grundy! Rescue, School House!"

There was a rush of feet. The New House trio turned their heads in alarm, to see Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. racing in their direction.

"Look out!" shouted Fatty Wynn.

Then there was another shout in another direction. Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence, and Digges, Pratt, and French had seen what was going on, and came racing to the rescue of the New House trio.

"Back up, New House!" roared Redfern.

"Bai Jove! Wescue, deah boys!"

"Back up, School House!" cried Blake gleefully.

The ringing shout brought other figures sprinting through the trees in a few moments. Talbot and Glyn of the Shell, and Dick Julian of the Fourth came rushing to join the School House band.

A snowball, flung with unerring aim by Digges, landed on Monty Lowther's ear. Another, whizzing from the fat hand of Fatty Wynn, caught Glyn full in the face and bowled him over. The School House inventor scrambled up, only to be captured by Pratt and French, and rolled in the snow. Talbot rushed to his rescue.

"Give 'em socks!" roared Figgins.

"Twounce the boundahs!" yelled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, jamming his eyeglass tightly into his eye and flinging a snowball at Redfern with such good effect that that hapless youth lost his balance and tumbled into a deep drift. "Give the wottahs beans, deah boys— Oh! Ow! Yawwoop! Bai Jove—"

A snowball had plastered itself lovingly over the noble face of the swell of St. Jim's, ending his words very abruptly.

Three more New House men came running to join the affray. Kit Wildrake appeared soon afterwards, and gleefully reinforced the School House juniors.

In a few minutes after Grundy's fall at the hands of Figgins & Co., a wild and whirling battle was raging in the snow between School House and New House.

Snowballs whizzed like cannon-fire. Fellows were collared and rolled in the snow, and had snow shoved down their collars and rubbed in their hair. Tom Merry rubbed Figgins' face cheerfully into the deepest snowdrift he could find, then had his own face rubbed there in his turn by Owen and Lawrence and Digges. He was rescued eventually by Talbot and Blake, and the battle raged on.

If any prefects saw it, they took no notice. Possibly they were afraid a wildly flung snowball might be their portion if they wandered too near!

At first, the New House had been in greater numbers, and had driven the School House fellows back. But the arrival of fresh reinforcements turned the scale, and with Tom Merry at their head, the School House juniors charged their rivals with such energy that Figgins and his merry men could not stand before them. The New House contingent broke and scattered—Figgins and Redfern, and one or two others who doggedly refused to retreat, being bowled over and left gasping and covered with snow.

"School House for ever!"

With a rousing shout, the School House ranks swept on, solidly shoulder to shoulder. They were irresistible! The broken ranks of the New House turned and fled, being pursued to the very steps of their building, up which they scrambled in wild retreat and vanished.

"Hurrah!" yelled Monty Lowther. "We win!"

(Continued on next page.)

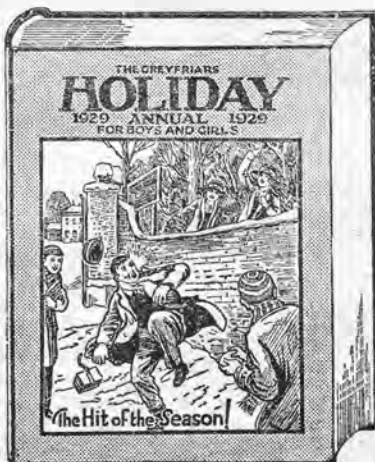
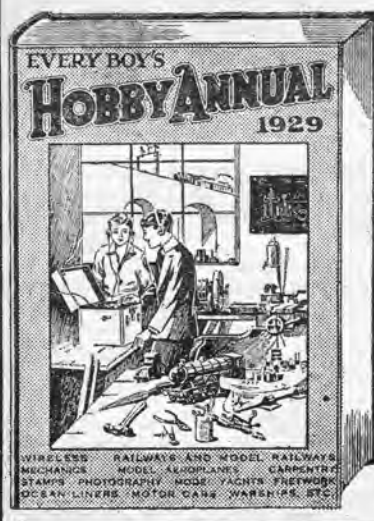
A PROBLEM SOLVED!

With the coming of Christmas the all-important question arises—presents! You visit the Stores with their highly-decorated counters and stalls exhibiting thousands of seasonable gifts to suit all pockets. But it's all very bewildering—what to buy to give your pal at Christmas.

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And when the New House stragglers had been chased and snow-balled and driven into their House, the School House fellows returned in joyful triumph across the quad.

But in the New House faces were disconsolate and dismal.

"Oh crumbs!" moaned Fatty Wynn. "I'm soaked! That beast Talbot stuffed snow down my neck!"

"Ow! Ey dose!" mumbled Lawrence, rubbing his swollen nasal organ, which had suffered badly from an extra hard snowball.

Redfern, straightening his crumpled collar, glared at Figgins.

"School House win again!" growled Redfern disgustedly. "It's time something was jolly well done about it! You're skipper, Figgins. It's time you did something to take Tom Merry & Co. down a peg—or else give the New Firm a chance!"

"Rats!" snorted Figgins, gingerly removing melted snow from his collar. "New Firm be blowed! I'm skipper, and I'll jolly well see that the New House put it across the School House bounders soon enough!"

"How are you going to do it?" demanded Owen. Figgins grinned as he glanced round the ring of faces in the hall.

"I've got a wheeze!" he announced. "Keep it dark for a few days, you chaps; it wouldn't do for Tom Merry & Co. to get wind of it! You know this funny play they're giving, that Grundy wrote? And that blessed spook that he and Trimble saw in the snow?"

"What about the spook?" asked Lawrence curiously.

"Listen!" said Figgins.

And as George Figgins told the New House fellows his great wheeze, chuckles were loud and long.

they're puttin' it on as a funny show! And it will be funny all right, if I know anythin' about Grundy! See?"

The crowd of juniors did see.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A yell of laughter rang out in the hall, which would have puzzled Grundy a good deal had he been within hearing distance. Happily he wasn't!

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Levison. "What a blessed scream!"

"I'm going to bag a reserved seat," drawled Cardew.

"Same here!" chuckled Clive.

"And little me!" grinned Kangaroo of the Shell.

"Just a couple of nights before we break up for Christmas!" commented Clifton Dane. "It'll be a great wind-up to the term—a funny show!"

"I suppose he got the idea from that blessed spook that



In a few minutes a wild and whirling battle was raging in the snow—like cannon fire. Fellows were collared and rolled in the snow, and socks!" roared Figgins. "Twounce the bounders!"

was seen in the quad that night," remarked Levison to Clive, as the two strolled away with Cardew. He frowned. "That was a ram business. To think they never found out who it was!"

"Well, there's still snow on the ground," yawned Cardew. "Perhaps the giddy spectre will be obligin' enough to appear again before the end of the term. Plenty of time yet, you know!"

"I wonder!" murmured Levison thoughtfully.

The last days of the term seemed to fly by on magic wings. Though there had been no further snowfalls, the cold continued, and the snow still lay thick where it had fallen. There was skating on the ponds at Rylcombe. But, though the snow was still upon the ground, the ghost monk did not put in another appearance during the few days following the notice of Grundy's play.

Whoever it had been who had so excited St. Jim's on

CHAPTER 11. Not a Success!

ODDLY enough, more was known of Grundy's great play in the New House than in the School House. Redfern had spread news of it to his chums, and so had Figgins. But in the School House the secret had been well kept.

Tom Merry and the others had been very careful that the rehearsals should be in strict secrecy. Several of the School House fellows not actually in the show had got wind that something was "up"—but what it was they did not know. Consequently, it was more or less a surprise to nearly everyone in the School House when, some days later, a notice went up on the board in Hall, informing its readers that:

"THE GRIM GHOST OF GRIMLY COLLEGE;

or,

HAUNTED UNTIL HORRIFIED!"

A Play in Ten Scenes,

by

GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY,

Will Take Place in Big Hall on

DECEMBER 19th at SEVEN O'CLOCK!

Reserved Seats, 1s.

Unreserved 6d.

All Profits will be Presented to the
Wayland Cottage Hospital.

Roll up in your hundreds to see this
AMAZING SHOW!

A swarm of grinning juniors surrounded the board as soon as the notice had been pinned up by Tom Merry.

"Good gad!" ejaculated Ralph Reckness Cardew of the Fourth. "Grundy's written a play!"

"And Tom Merry & Co. are all in it!" exclaimed Kerruish wonderingly, reading the names of the actors which followed at the foot of the notice. "They must be off their rockers! If Grundy wrote it it's sure to be fearful tripe!"

"If you ask me, I should say that our friend Thomas is pullin' dear old Grundy's leg!" chuckled Cardew. "Grundy may be takin' his play seriously, but I'll bet ten to one in doughnuts that the rest of the giddy company aren't! They've seen the funny side of the show all right, and so

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that memorable night, did not seem to intend repeating his exploit a third time.

"Perhaps he's waiting for another night when the snow's falling thick," Curly Gibson remarked to a group of other Third-Formers one evening in the fags' Common-room. "Whoever the chap was, I expect he's afraid he'd be too easily seen unless snow's falling."

"I expect that's it," agreed Levison minor. "What do you say, Wally?"

Wally D'Arcy, who was frizzling a rather doubtful-looking kipper over the fire on the end of a toasting-fork, stared darkly into the flames.

"Who says it was a chap at all?" said Wally meaningly. "When the snow's on the ground the ghost of St. Jim's walks." He nodded impressively. "By the way, I suppose we chaps are all going to see Grundy's Christmas show?"



ered quad between School House and New House. Snowballs whizzed and snow shoved down their collars and rubbed in their hair. "Give 'em hell!" yelled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. (See Chapter 10.)

"I'm not!" sniffed Joe Frayne. "It's bound to be rot!"

"Not with Tom Merry in it," said Reggie Manners, "and my major. My major wouldn't be in it if it was rot, so there, young Frayne! It's going to be rattling good! Frightfully thrilling!"

"Rats!" exclaimed Joe Frayne. "Grundy couldn't write a play for little apples!"

Wally D'Arcy laid down his kipper and rose and began peeling off his coat.

"Grundy wrote that play," said Wally firmly, "and I'm backing up Grundy! He may be an ass sometimes; but he jolly well put up a ripping show when he biffed that poacher chap, Luke Crow, on the jaw for me! The Third has jolly well got to roll up and back up Grundy! See?"

Wally rolled up his sleeves.

"Now," he growled, "who says he's not going to see Grundy's show?"

There was no answer.

"What about you, young Frayne?" demanded Wally fiercely.

"Oh, I'm going!" said Joe Frayne hastily. "D-did I say I wasn't? My mistake! I was only joking."

"Good!" said Wally. "That's all right, then!"

And, picking up his toasting-fork again, the leader of the Third resumed his efforts to reduce his kipper to a blackened cinder.

In prophesying that Figgins' "Macbeth" would fall as flat as a pancake, Hammond of the Fourth had shown himself a very true prophet indeed!

The New House performance of "Macbeth" took place in Big Hall on the evening before the School House performance of "The Grim Ghost of Grimly College!" A good number of School House juniors went to see it, though Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. and one or two others were absent, since they were busy with the final rehearsal of their own show.

Dr. Holmes, the headmaster of St. Jim's, was present, in the front row, together with Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster of the New House, and Mr. Linton and Mr. Lathom, the masters of the Shell and Fourth. And the New House fellows were there in force to cheer Figgins and his supporters.

But that the show fell flat there was no doubt—no possible doubt whatever.

Figgins himself did very well indeed in the title role, and Redfern was good as his wife, the sinister Lady Macbeth. But the rest of the cast were decidedly nervous, with the result that they continually forgot their lines, and went off at the wrong moments and hurried in again when they discovered their mistake. The Head had started the evening with a benevolent smile which, as Levison remarked under his breath to Clive, became decidedly strained as the evening wore on.

Most of the fellows found things so very dull that they went to sleep. Only twice did they really enjoy the performance. The first time was when, during the famous sleepwalking scene, the curtain was accidentally lowered in the middle of Lady Macbeth's stately passage; and when the curtain was hastily raised again a few moments later, Lady Macbeth—alias Redfern—was found busily punching Owen's head for the lapse.

The second occasion when the juniors thought they were perhaps going to get their money's worth, after all, was when Fatty Wynn, as Banquo's ghost, stumbled over his voluminous ghostly draperies and went sprawling on the boards, and had to be helped to his feet by a very worried Macbeth. After that, things became dull again the juniors considered.

George Figgins was in a very bad temper after the performance.

"An utter wash-out!" he growled. "You silly asses—a school for crippled half-wits could have put up a better show than that! Reddy was the only one of you who was any good!"

It was in the little dressing-room behind the stage that Figgins spoke those wrathful words. And the New House Junior Dramatic Society, busy removing traces of make-up, were too dismal just then to answer him back.

"Absolutely rotten!" growled Figgins, after a pause.

"Putrid!"

"Oh, shut up, for goodness' sake!" growled Owen. "You weren't so mighty good yourself, anyway!"

"Hear, hear!"

Figgins glared.

He considered that he had played his part as well, if not better than any London actor.

"Well, I like that!" he hooted. "You fellows didn't back me up at all. With the exception of Reddy you were dud!"

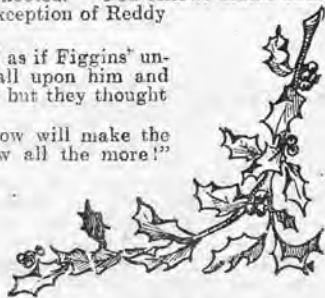
For a moment it looked as if Figgins' unhappy followers would fall upon him and smite him hip and thigh, but they thought better of it.

"This wash-out of a show will make the School House crowd crow all the more!" grunted Redfern.

At that Figgins suddenly grinned.

"Let 'em!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha! Just wait till to-morrow night!"



CHAPTER 12.

The Interrupted Play!

THE deep tones of the school clock striking seven boomed out across the quad.

It was the following evening. Outside, snow had begun to fall, covering the churned drifts in the quad with a fresh mantle of smooth, gleaming whiteness. In Big Hall a cheerful din of talk and laughter echoed. It had been scarcely three-quarters full on the previous evening, but now it was packed to capacity. Dozens of fellows who had been too late to procure seats were standing at the back. On the door a big notice was pinned: "House Full!"

There were no masters present to-night—a fact which did not seem to worry anyone particularly. An important masters' meeting was taking place in connection with the results of the end-of-term exams, which prevented their attendance. But Kildare was there with Darrell and several other Sixth-Formers. And, more important still, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's popular girl cousin, Ethel Cleveland, was in the front row with Doris Levison, Levison's pretty sister.

"I didn't know Cousin Ethel was going to be here to-night," Glyn whispered to Kangaroo.

"Gussy told me she's only just arrived," answered the Australian junior. "He didn't know she was coming, either. But he'd told her about this show in a letter, I think, and so she's come to see it."

"It's seven now," remarked Glyn. "Time things started!"

Even as he spoke, the curtains hiding the stage parted a fraction and Tom Merry stepped into view. Instantly there was a thunderous storm of applause. Tom grinned and held up his hand.

"Awfully glad to see such a good crowd here," he said cheerily. "Hope you'll enjoy the show, too. I'm jolly sure you will! I've just come up to explain, before we begin our—er—thrilling drama—"

There was a loud chorus of chuckles. Tom grinned. "Our thrilling drama," he went on, "is based on the legend of the white monk of St. Jim's that is said to haunt the school. Without wishing to make fun of an old and romantic story, our author, Mr. Grundy—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Good old Grundy!"

"Author!"

"Mr. Grundy has written what I really believe to be the funniest skit on spook melodrama that has ever been penned!" Tom went on, safe in the knowledge that Grundy was at that moment busily engaged in the dressing-room. "We only hope that you all will find it funny, too!"

He bowed and withdrew, followed by a rousing cheer. In the back rows, Curly Gibson looked at Wally D'Arcy rather blankly.

"My hat! It's a funny show!"

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Wally.

The lights were lowered and the footlights turned on. A piano, played by Marie Rivers, the school nurse, struck up a tune. Then the curtain was raised, revealing the first scene of "The Grim Ghost of Grimly College; or, Haunted Until Horrified!"

In a breathless silence, George Alfred Grundy strode on to the stage, in his part of George Alfred Munday, the saviour of Grimly College! From behind the scenes a number of electric fans made a very passable imitation of a rushing wind, whilst "thunder" rumbled with extraordinary realism—the thunder being made by a sheet of metal shaken between two juniors.

Grundy paused in the centre of the stage and glanced fearfully round at the shadowy walls of "the haunted library" in which he was supposed to be.

"Hark!" hissed Grundy. "How the thunder rolls and the wind whines weirdly under the old eaves of Grimly College! 'Tis a dark and dirty night! Heaven help the sailors on a night like this!"

As Tom Merry & Co. had foreseen, there was an instant yell of laughter that fairly echoed in the big hall. Tom, watching anxiously from the wings, drew a deep breath of relief. Grundy had not noticed it.

"Alone in the haunted library," continued Grundy, in thrilling tones. "My hat—what a place to be in! But I am not afraid! No Grundy—I mean Munday—ever feared anything! It is not for nothing that my schoolfellows call

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me Lion-Hearted Munday—I mean, Grundy! No, I mean Munday," he added hastily.

There was another yell of laughter. The audience liked Grundy in his role of George Alfred Munday! They thought he was screamingly funny. That Grundy really imagined for a moment that he was thrilling them to the marrow never entered their heads.

And strangely enough, Grundy never heard their laughter! So wrapped up in his part was he, so intent upon his performance, that he was as good as blind and deaf to all else.

Then Blake entered, in his part of Dr. Dainwright, the headmaster of Grimly College. With his venerable, white whiskers and "bald" wig and rustling gown, Blake made quite a dignified figure. Grundy turned to him.

"Good-evening, Dr. Drainpipe!"

Ever since Monty Lowther's humorous use of that name, Grundy had found himself using it by mistake as if hypnotised into doing so. But he was so used to it now that he did not realise it had slipped from him on this occasion.

But though Grundy didn't, the audience did! They roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my aunt!" gasped Levison to Cousin Ethel. "I never knew Grundy had it in him to be so funny! Grundy's not half the ass we've always thought him!"

Levison did not realise, any more than did Cousin Ethel or the rest of the audience, that Grundy had not meant to say what he had. And the laughter of the audience was loud and long.

"Blessed if Grundy knows they're laughing, either!" Tom Merry grinned to Monty Lowther in the wings. "My hat, the show's started off in ripping style!"

"Yes, they like it all right," chuckled Lowther, as the laughter of the audience came to their ears. "This is going to be the hit of the term!"

When the curtain was rung down on the end of the first scene, the audience was delighted. So was Grundy, as the applause thundered through the hall.

"Listen to it, you chaps!" exclaimed Grundy proudly. "Just listen to it!"

"Good old Grundy!" chuckled Wilkins, with a wink at Tom Merry. "You're doing fine!"

"You've thrilled 'em all right, old man," said Gunn gravely.

Wilkins and Gunn had made the peace with Grundy some time ago, and had both been admitted into the cast.

"I say, Gussy," said Grundy, as the scene was hastily changed, "I hope Miss Cleveland won't find this show too thrilling? Girls get scared, you know."

"I think my cousin will be able to beah it," returned Arthur Augustus solemnly.

"Good!" said Grundy.

The curtain rose again, showing Jasper Fox, the rascally prefect, in his study at Grimly College. Monty Lowther, who was playing the part of Jasper, had deliberately made himself look as much like Gerald Knox, the black sheep of the Sixth, as possible, and the effect was quite an extraordinary likeness. There was a yell from the audience at sight of him, and even Kildare grinned.

With nine scenes in the play, each scene was necessarily short. But the quick changes had the benefit of making the action of the play very brisk, and kept the audience keyed up to a high pitch of enthusiasm.

Grundy, in his disguise of the "spook" ghost-monk, brought the house down when he appeared in front of Jasper Fox in the haunted crypt. His sepulchral groans were even more terrifying than those which Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had heard issuing from Study No. 3 on that memorable afternoon!

"Great stuff!" panted Wildrake, at the end of the scene. "It's funnier than 'Charley's Aunt'!"

"Deuced clever show," Kildare commented to Darrell. "I always thought that kid Grundy was a hopeless dunce, but he seems to be clever at some things! He's certainly written a funny show! Ha, ha, ha!"

Which remark from the captain would have considerably surprised Grundy, in the dressing-room, could he have heard it.

The next three scenes all "went with a bang!" as Tom Merry expressed it. Then the curtain rose on the haunted Form-room, with a class presided over by the villain—Tom Merry, in actual fact—who was impersonating the unfortunate Dr. Dainwright.

The scene went well, until the entry of the ghost for the grand climax. Tom was very amusing as the brutal bogus Head, and he flogged his charges ad lib. to the special delight of Wally D'Arcy & Co. at the rear of the hall.

Then, with a ghastly groan, the "ghost" of Grimly



College came gliding out of the dark corner behind the blackboard, tossing its arms and waving its ghostly white draperies in truly awful fashion. Tom clasped his hands to his head in horror.

"The ghostly monk!" he shrieked. "Help! Hellup!"

"Yes," boomed Grundy from beneath the white cowl that hid his face, "I am the ghost monk of Grimly College! Gr-r-r-r! Gr-r-r-r! Gug-gug-guggle! Boooooo!"

Grundy imagined that he was thrilling the audience to death. His groans became louder and more awful as he stalked towards the terror-stricken impostor in the master's desk.

"Help!" wailed Tom. "I admit all! I am not the real Dr. Drainpipe! You'll find him a hungry captive in the boot-room."

Then, to his surprise, Tom heard the shrieks of laughter from the audience suddenly die away. There was a tense silence. It was followed in another moment by yells of real fear from the hall.

"What the thump!" breathed Tom, shooting a quick glance into the darkened auditorium.

Then he jumped.

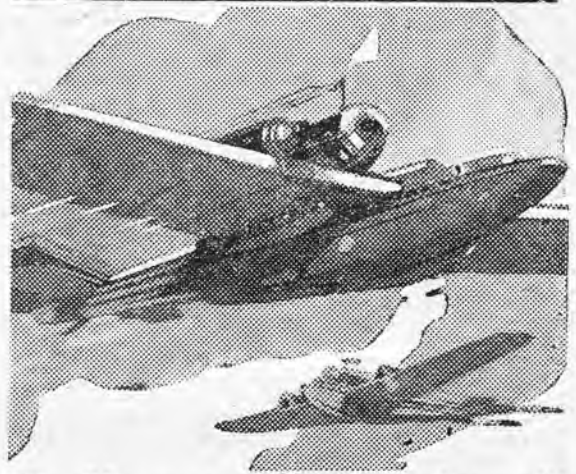
There was a row of tall cupboards at the back of the hall, and from one of these an eerie spectral shape had come gliding! This one did not wave its arms and groan, as did Grundy. It merely glided slowly, with downcast, hooded head, down the darkened aisle between the rows of seats. A strange phosphorescence glowed from its white robes, a ghostly spectral light that caused even Tom's heart to jump for a moment.

Shrieks of fear from the fags were mingled with cries of alarm from the other seats. There was a thunder of stampeding footsteps, mingled with crash upon crash of overturning chairs.

Grundy halted in the centre of the stage, staring in horror at the real ghost—as it seemed to be—that was drifting slowly up the hall. Then he gave a yell and dived under one of the desks on the stage.

"The white monk!" shrieked someone in the audience. "The ghost of St. Jim's!"

In another moment there was a wild panic as the audience swarmed madly towards the doors.



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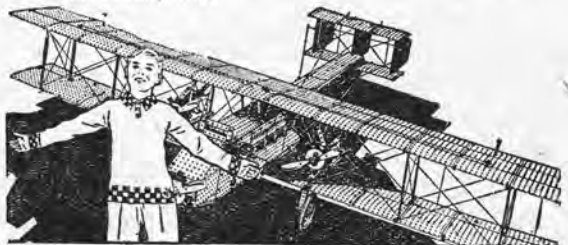
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CHAPTER 13. Grundy's Triumph.

"MY hat!" gasped Tom Merry.

The other actors on the stage had all jumped to their feet in consternation and alarm, their eyes riveted on the eerie shape of the ghostly monk.

In the hall Kildare and the few Sixth-Formers were striving to keep order. But the panic among the fags had spread to a large proportion of the older juniors, and those who were stronger nerved were carried away in the rush.

And there was no doubt that the hooded figure, with the spectral light glimmering from its white garments, was sufficiently frightening to explain the panic that had ensued!

Tom Merry cast a swift glance at Cousin Ethel and Doris Levison. He was relieved to see that the two girls, though they had jumped to their feet like everyone else, were staring at the "ghost" in puzzled bewilderment rather than alarm.

"Stop!" shouted Kildare in a commanding voice to the swarms of fellows bolting towards the doors. "Stay where you are!"

The captain's stern voice brought the majority of the fellows to reason. They stopped, looking decidedly sheepish. They realised now that they had been japed. Whoever was beneath that ghostly-looking garment, it was somebody of flesh and blood!

The fags had all fled, but the rest of the audience had recovered its nerve by now. The ghostly figure had halted, as if uncertain.

The sight of the captain of St. Jim's, standing with a furious frown upon his face at the end of the aisle, seemed to have startled the ghost considerably! Evidently the white monk had not expected to find Kildare among the audience.

Kildare strode towards the white figure.

"I don't know who you are," said the captain in a voice that shook with anger, "but I'll soon find out!"

He reached out a hand, even as the ghost turned as if to bolt. The hood was dragged aside, revealing the face of George Biggins of the New House.

"Gweat Scott!" breathed Arthur Augustus, who was on

(Continued on next page.)



the stage beside Tom Merry. "Figgay! A New House jape, bai Jove!"

The jape had certainly been wonderfully successful, so far as interrupting the School House play was concerned. But Figgins was not looking altogether happy, all the same! There was a look in Kildare's eyes that the New House leader did not like at all!

"Figgins!" exclaimed the captain of St. Jim's in amazement. "Great Scott! I shouldn't have thought you would play a ridiculous game like this, Figgins!"

"It was only a j-joke, Kildare," stammered Figgins miserably.

"Then it's a very poor one," said the captain quietly. "Don't you realise that you might have scared some of the fags out of their senses?"

"Oh dear!" mumbled Figgins. "I—I hadn't thought of that, Kildare!"

"And with ladies present—" went on Kildare. Figgins jumped, and gave an exclamation of consternation. He glanced round in horror, and then his eyes fell for the first time on Cousin Ethel and Doris Levison near the footlights.

Figgins turned a peculiar shade of green.

"C-o-c-cousin Ethel!" he stuttered, looking as if he wished that the floor could have opened and swallowed him.

As was well known at St. Jim's, George Figgins had a very warm admiration for Gussy's pretty cousin. The two were great chums, in fact. It was very certain that, had Figgins known of Ethel's presence that evening, he would sooner have jumped into the Rhyl than have "japed" the School House show.

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Figgins. "I never knew you were here!"

Cousin Ethel, who was usually so pleased to see Figgins, this time gave him a very disapproving look, which changed Figgins' face from green to crimson.

"I don't see what that has to do with it," said Cousin Ethel coldly. "It was a ridiculous joke to play, in any case!"

And she turned away. Figgins seemed to shrink in size visibly, as Cardew remarked in an undertone to Clive.

Kildare eyed Figgins sternly.

"Does this joke of yours—if you can call it a joke—mean that it was you who was seen out in the snow in the quad on those previous occasions?"

"Oh, no," said Figgins hastily. "Rather not! It was that that gave me the idea, you see. I—I—"

Kildare, watching Figgins' face searchingly, saw that the leader of the New House juniors was speaking the truth.

The captain of St. Jim's had by no means given up hope of discovering the identity of the mysterious individual who had so startled St. Jim's a few days before. But it was evidently not George Figgins.

"You'd better come with me now," said Kildare grimly.

And Figgins, with a last agonised glance at Cousin Ethel's averted head, followed the captain from the hall.

"That means a licking!" chuckled Lefevre, the captain of the Fifth, with satisfaction. "Serve the young idiot right! He's spoilt the show!"

But Lefevre was not quite right in that. Though a good many of the audience had left, there were still plenty who were anxious to witness the finish of the ghostly doings at Grimly College, and in a short while the performance of Grundy's "thrilling" masterpiece was resumed.

But there was no doubt that a good deal of the "kick" had now gone from the performance. After the real thrill of that spectral figure in the darkness of the hall, Grundy's antics as the ghost of Grimly College fell a trifle flat. However, most of the show had been a roaring success, and there was hearty applause at the finish.

Yells of "Author" brought Grundy, blushing, before the curtain, and his reception was thunderous. He retired, after stumbingly attempting a speech, fairly swollen with pride, and still, amazingly enough, utterly ignorant of the fact that he had provided his patrons with an evening of merriment instead of an evening of thrills. Anyway, it was Grundy's night of triumph!

"Only Grundy could miss spotting what a joke it all was!" grinned Gunn to Tom Merry and Blake in the dressing-room.

"Well, it's been a great success, anyway," said Manners. "In spite of that ass Figgins trying to be funny!"

"The New House thought they'd get a bit of their own back, after that hiding we gave 'em in the snow the other afternoon, I suppose," grunted Herries.

"The wotten boundahs ought to be taught a lesson," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I have a good mind to give Figgay a fearful thwack!"

"Rats!" growled Blake. "It's not Figgy, it's the whole

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blessed New House that wants licking for that! They all knew about it, you can bet your bottom dollar!"

"Well, I vote we give it 'em!" boomed Grundy, who had joined the group. "Trying to rag a ripping play like mine; it's a bit thick! Those New House rotters want putting in their places!"

Monty Lowther's eyes gleamed.

"My hat!"

"What's up, Monty?" asked Tom Merry.

"I'll tell you what!" exclaimed Monty Lowther excitedly. "To-morrow night is the last night of the term. Things are usually pretty free-and-easy before we break up. And I fancy it wouldn't be difficult for us, seeing things are so free-and-easy, to raid the New House dorm to-night!"

"Whew!" breathed Digby.

"Let's get out to-night, and raid the bounders in their beds!" went on Lowther. "It's snowing hard outside. We should never be spotted crossing the quad. A grand raid like that would wind up the term rippingly. It would square things up for them ragging our show. Even though Figgy got licked by Kildare, the New House chaps will crow like anything at the way Figgy started a panic."

"That's the wheeze!" cried Herries. "Let's do it!"

It was a risky project, to raid the New House dormitories at night, as none realised better than Tom Merry. But, as Monty had remarked, things were very free-and-easy during the last few days of term, and, under the circumstances, it could be done without the normal risks.

It was certainly a pleasing prospect, too, to beard the lion in its den, so to speak. If the raid was successful, it would certainly crown the School House as cock House for the term!

"Right!" said Tom Merry, his eyes dancing. "We'll raid 'em to-night!"

And the actors who had taken part in that wonderful play, "The Grim Ghost of Grimly College; or, Haunted Until Horrified!" joined in a rousing cheer that fairly echoed round the little dressing-room!



CHAPTER 14. The Midnight Raiders.



"MY hat! Look at the snow!"

It was Monty Lowther who made that remark, peering out through one of the windows of the Shell dormitory.

Eleven o'clock had just struck, and the School House juniors were preparing for their daring assault upon the New House.

The dormitory was filled with shadowy figures. The Fourth-Formers, with only one or two exceptions, such as Mellish and Trimble, had come stealing in a dim procession into the Shell dormitory. All of them were very warmly wrapped up in sweaters and mufflers, for the passage across the quad promised to be a chilly business. As Lowther had just remarked, as he peered out of the window, it was snowing with a vengeance!

The Shell fellows were busily following the example of the Fourth-Formers, and were dressing themselves in their warmest things.

"It's snowing harder than ever!" grunted Blake. "You can hardly see a thing!"

"Good!" chuckled Tom Merry. "We shan't be spotted, then, by any of the beaks!"

"This is the first fall of snow since that night Grundy saw the blessed white monk in the quad," grinned Racke from his bed. Aubrey Racke, like Crooke and Skimpole and one or two others, who, either from timidity or dislike of leaving warm beds on a cold night, had also declined to join the raiders. "The giddy ghost will walk again to-night, I expect, in all this snow, so look out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" sniggered Crooke. "Yes, look out for the spook you chaps!"

Tom Merry, buttoning up his coat over his sweater, turned towards the pair.

"Don't talk so much," he said impatiently, "but come and lend a hand with this rope-ladder, Crooke. Throw it down to me, when we've all gone, and shut the window. See? Then when you hear a pebble hit the window, that means we've come back."

"Right-ho!" nodded Crooke.

"And if you fall asleep while we're away, and aren't ready to catch the ladder when we get back, you'll wish you'd never been born!" exclaimed Blake warningly.





"After him!" With a rush the juniors raced in pursuit of the flying, white-robed figure. With a tremendous spurt, Tom Merry shot ahead of the rest. He flung himself forward, gripping the fugitive round the waist, and the unknown staggered and fell. (See Chapter 16.)

"Hear, hear!" agreed half a dozen of the juniors.

"Oh, rats!" grunted Croke.

Everyone was ready now. Each fellow had left a bolster in his bed, so that should any master glance in casually during their absence it would look as if the whole dormitory was present and sleeping.

Tom Merry was the first to swing out over the sill and climb nimbly down the swaying rope-ladder. Manners followed him, and Blake and Monty Lowther and Arthur Augustus came next. One by one the School House raiders climbed down to the quad, with the snow swirling thickly round them as they descended.

When the last of the fellows had come safely to earth—or, rather, to snow—the ladder was thrown down to Tom Merry. Croke, his head dimly visible at the dormitory window above, waved to them. Then Tom Merry led the swarm of School House juniors in the direction of the New House.

They were like an army of ghosts! No sound of their footsteps was to be heard as they made their way quickly across the quad. The snow whirled down in wild eddies around them, shutting them in as if by a wall.

"Ugh!" grunted Digby. "If that white monk ever walked, this is the night for him, if you ask me!"

"Don't talk about it!" pleaded Clarence York Tompkins, the most timid fellow in the Fourth. He glanced round apprehensively into the swirling snowflakes.

"Don't worry about the white monk, kid," grinned Blake. "You wait till we're in the New House dorm! You'll forget everything else then! I fancy Figgy & Co. will give us a good scrap to-night! We shan't have any time to worry about spooks."

At the foot of the New House wall, under Figgins' dormitory windows, the School House fellows halted.

Tom Merry was glad to find that a very deep snowdrift had piled up under the wall. It was not going to be exactly

easy for him to carry through with the pioneer work that he had undertaken—to climb up by the ivy and a drain-pipe to the window of the box-room next door to the dormitory above, and from there lower the rope-ladder to the rest! He was not funkng it; but the knowledge that a deep drift of snow was underneath to receive him if he tumbled was rather reassuring and comforting.

With the rope-ladder wound round him under his coat the captain of the Shell swung up on the old ivy. The raiders watched him climb up hand over hand, with the snowflakes beating thickly round his athletic form as he made his way higher and higher.

The falling snow was so thick now that it was only dimly that the juniors below could see their leader fumbling at the window of the box-room when he eventually won his way up to it. Manners had visited the New House previously that evening, ostensibly to see Redfern about some photographic apparatus, but actually to unfasten that particular window; and he had succeeded in doing so unknown to the New House fellows.

"He's in!" muttered Monty Lowther excitedly, as Tom crawled out of sight into the box-room. "Stand by for the ladder!"

In the box-room, Tom Merry made the end of the ladder fast to a heavy wooden chest filled with old school books, and threw the other end out of the window. It snaked downwards, and Cardew caught the end as it fell, and was the first to swarm up.

"One at a time!" warned Talbot.

And one after another the School House raiders climbed up and vanished into the box-room window. There were several, such as Tompkins, who by no means relished the climb any more than they had relished the climb down from the School House. But no one actually funkng it, and

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before long the band of raiders were safely within the walls of the rival House.

"Now for it!" chortled Herries. "This is where Figgy gets the surprise of his life!"

With Tom Merry leading the way, the juniors crept noiselessly from the box-room, along the passage to the next door—that of the New House Fourth Form dormitory. The captain of the Shell opened the door without a sound, and like shadows the School House men stole into the dark dormitory.

"Wait for Tom Merry's signal!" whispered Blake.

With hardly a sound the raiders distributed themselves along the length of the dormitory, two to each sleeping figure. The heavy breathing of the New House fellows and a lusty snoring from Fatty Wynn's bed continued uninterrupted.

But then, just as Tom Merry was about to give the signal, there was a sound from Kerr's bed. The Scottish junior, as if warned by some instinct in his sleep, had rolled over and sat up. The School House fellows heard his startled gasp.

Talbot and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were near Kerr, and they made an instant dive towards him, to silence him before he gave warning to the sleeping dormitory. But they were too late!

In another moment Kerr had sent a startled cry ringing through the dormitory:

"Wake up, New House!"

There was a rustle of blankets, gasps, and exclamations in the gloom.

"Collar 'em!" sang out Tom Merry.

The next instant a desperate struggle was in progress in the New House dormitory.



CHAPTER 15. The Spectre Again!



"GREAT pip!"

"School House rotters!"

"Oh crumbs!"

At first the New House juniors could scarcely believe their eyes as they saw the dim figures of their rivals down the length of the dormitory.

But they soon found out they were not dreaming. Hands grasped them and dragged them from their beds, and they heard the chuckles of the raiders as they struggled desperately in the gloom.

"Back up!" panted Figgins desperately, scrambling out of bed as Tom Merry and Levison strove to collar him.

Fortunately, the Fourth Form dormitory in the New House was situated a good distance from the prefects' quarters and from Mr. Ratcliff's room. Though there was a good deal of noise, it was unlikely that anyone in authority would hear it, unless it exceeded all bounds. And neither the School House nor the New House fellows were likely to forget themselves sufficiently to make such a great din as might bring trouble to all concerned.

Figgins, hitting out wildly, heard a gasp from someone as he sent one of his foes flying backwards on to the bed.

"New House for ever!" panted Figgins, flinging himself at a second of the shadowy figures.

The odds against the New House were terrific. But not for long.

Owen had had the presence of mind to dart for the door as soon as he realised what was taking place, and, despite the attempts of Herries and Dick Julian to stop him, he fought his way through and out into the passage.

"Oh crumbs!" grunted Herries. "He's gone for the Shell!"

Owen had! It did not take long to rouse the New House Shell, either, and in another minute reinforcements for the New House fellows came pouring in at the dormitory door, despite all efforts to keep them out.

"New House for ever!" chortled Owen, as he led the newcomers to the fray, sweeping aside half a dozen School House juniors in their rush.

The coming of their allies of the Shell heartened Figgins & Co. in a moment. They redoubled their struggles, and many of them fought free from the School House men who had been holding them down on their beds.

"Ow! Oh cwumbs!"

There was a dangerously loud yell from Arthur Augustus

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as Redfern seized a water-jug and sent its contents shooting through the air into a swarm of School House fellows. Arthur Augustus was unlucky enough to receive most of it, and the icy water fairly drenched him.

"Oh, gwoooooh! Oh deah! Weddy, you wottah—"

The swell of St. Jim's hurled himself at Redfern, and the two went sprawling over one of the beds, locked in each other's arms. Water was streaming from D'Arcy's hair, and Redfern gasped as a stream of it ran down his neck.

The two struggled and fought, the bed creaking dismally beneath them. Then suddenly the mattress gave way, and the pair collapsed with it in the wreck of the bed.

Figgins, wielding a pillow with deadly effect, knocked Grundy flying on top of Arthur Augustus and Redfern, and the three became so hopelessly entangled in the broken bedstead that for a long while they were caught there, helpless. Chuckling, Figgins and Pratt commenced to belabour Grundy and Arthur Augustus with pillows, and the feathers flew like snow. Redfern, underneath, choked and howled, half suffocated, before he was able to squirm out.

Still the struggle raged with undiminished vigour. But it soon became evident that the School House were getting the better of things.

Tom Merry, sitting on Figgins' chest on one of the beds—whilst Monty Lowther, chuckling, proceeded to squeeze a sponge of icy water over the unfortunate New House leader's face—glanced round and saw that all along the dormitory School House fellows had New House men pinned down on the beds and on the floor, and were "putting them through it" in a variety of ways.

"Hurrah for us!" grinned Tom Merry.

The raid had been successful—a glorious victory for the School House!

"This'll teach you to muck up a School House show, Figgy!" chuckled Monty Lowther, as he proceeded to stuff the sponge down Figgins' neck. "I don't think you'll be so keen to play at spooks another time!"

"You rotters!" gasped Figgins. "I'll smash you! Oh! Gwoooooh!"

There was a lull for a moment. And then there was a sudden, startled cry in the dormitory.

Talbot of the Shell, standing near one of the windows with a pillow in his hand, with which he had just been thumping Clampe very heartily, was staring out of the window into the quad below, with a very strange expression on his face.

"Great Scott! Look!"

Talbot flung out a pointing hand.

Something in the tenseness of his voice caused the others to run to the window, releasing their various victims. School House and New House fellows crowded to see what it was that had so startled Talbot.

They soon saw!

The snow had stopped quite abruptly, and only a few desultory flakes were falling lazily through the air. The quad was revealed clearly, an expanse of gleaming white in the light of the stars.

Near the chapel, under the snow-laden elms, an eerie figure was gliding—a hooded, monkish shape, with downcast head and unseen face.

The white monk had come again!

With startled faces, and in utter silence, School House and New House fellows stared down at the spectral shape in the snow.



CHAPTER 16. The Ghost-Hunters!



"THE white monk!" breathed Tom Merry.

What could it mean?

Despite himself, Tom Merry felt a tingling sensation in his scalp, as he watched that ghostly, hooded shape drifting among the trees.

It had come again! On this, the first night that snow had fallen since its last appearance, the mysterious ghost had once more appeared, to walk the snow-bound quad!

Tom Merry swung round. Figgins was near him, and Tom gripped his arm.

"Come along!" breathed the captain of the Shell. "Are you game to try and catch"—he flung out a pointing hand—"that?"

"Yes!" answered Figgins.

"Then come on!"





Too many cooks spoil the broth, and Tom did not want too many fellows with him in his attempt to lay the mysterious spectre by the heels. So he quietly signalled to Manners and Monty Lowther, to Talbot, and to Blake & Co., and Kerr. The little party of ten sped from the dormitory and along to the box-room. In another moment Tom Merry was leading the way down the swaying ladder to the snow below.

"Which way?" breathed Figgins.

The spectral shape had vanished now. Snow was falling lightly round them as Digby—the last to descend—dropped to the ground.

"This way!" breathed Tom Merry.

With footsteps noiseless in the smooth white blanket that lay over the quad the group of juniors raced along in the shadow of the wall towards the chapel.

They reached the corner of the building without having caught sight again of the eerie shape. It seemed to have vanished utterly. The juniors halted, peering through the falling snow along the row of grim old elms that pointed their skeleton fingers to the heavy snow-clouds that were drifting up again across the stars.

Suddenly Figgins gripped Tom by the shoulder.

"Look!"

Tom stared eagerly in the direction of Figgins' pointing finger. He caught his breath.

At the far end of the avenue of elms the white shape of what seemed to be a monk could be seen standing motionless.

"Gweat Scott!" muttered Arthur Augustus. "It—it looks tewwibly ghostly!"

"Don't be an ass!" said Kerr coolly. The Scottish junior was far too hard-headed to feel even the slight eerie thrill that had touched the others.

As they watched, wondering and uncertain what to do, the white shape among the distant trees began to glide slowly towards them. It paused frequently, and once or twice it stooped down, as if examining the snow near the foot of the trees.

"Queer!" muttered Blake.

Then he gave a gasp, as someone touched his arm from behind, and jumped round, startled. He found Redfern at his side.

"I'm in this!" said Redfern grimly. Then he caught sight of the distant, eerie figure and caught his breath. "My hat!"

"Quiet!" warned Tom. There was no way by which they could creep round to encircle the mysterious shape without being seen. Tom realised that, and came to a swift decision.

"Our only chance is to rush the chap, whoever he is," whispered the captain of the Shell. "He won't hear us,

and he may not see us at once. We're most of us pretty quick on our pins, and with luck we should be able to collar him before he gets far."

"Rather!" nodded Manners.

"Ready?" muttered Tom. "Wait till he stoops again. Now!"

And at the word the group of juniors broke into a swift, silent run towards the hooded white figure in the trees.

They were scarcely fifty yards from the spectre when it saw them. Tom fancied he heard a startled cry from the unseen hooded face that was staring at them as they raced on through the snow. Then the monk turned and raced away among the trees, a swift, noiseless shape.

"After him!" gasped Redfern.

Whoever it was in that monkish white garment, he was a fast runner. When Tom Merry and his companions reached the end of the aisle of trees there was no sign of the ghostly fugitive.

The juniors halted, breathless, staring round. There was a sharp cry from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Bai Jove! There he is!"

The others turned at D'Arcy's cry, staring back the way they had come. A fitting shape could be seen among the elms, running towards the chapel. Tom gave an exclamation of chagrin.

"My hat! He's tricked us!"

Once again the juniors broke into a run.

They had not covered many yards, however, before the hunted figure vanished again, round the corner of the chapel. When they reached the chapel wall there was no sign of the spectre.

"Great pip!" muttered Monty Lowther. "Vanished again! Hanged if it don't seem like a proper ghost, the way it disappears into thin air!"

There was a sudden shout from Blake.

"No; there it goes!"

He set off at a run towards the dark opening of the cloisters. He had just glimpsed a white figure vanishing in that direction.

The juniors reached the cloisters, excited and breathless, and were rewarded by the sight of the fugitive figure flitting out of sight among the arches.

"He thinks he's given us the slip," said Tom Merry grimly. "If he only knew it, he's walked into a trap! Quick, some of you! Nip along to the other opening there!"

Redfern and Manners hastened to obey, and sped across to the other opening, near the School House corner. There was now no possible exit for the mysterious midnight visitor. As Tom had said, he had fallen into a trap!

Gather Round the Yule Log, Boys!

"A Merry Christmas, Chums!"

ONCE more it is my pleasure to voice the age-old greeting to my many thousands of chums, but it loses nothing through repetition. Year in and year out the 25th of December sees greetings exchanged between friends in every quarter of the globe. It is the day of rejoicing—the day for which we have worked and waited patiently.

The critical among you will say perhaps that I'm a bit early. Ah, well, there are umpteen reasons why the *Bumper Christmas Number* of the GEM should be in your hands now, but I won't bother you with them. Look at it in this way: it's far better to be early than late.

I can picture you fellows having the time of your life. I can hear the merry laughter of "Gemites." I can see the turkey and the puddings and the crackers all playing their part in your Christmas enjoyment.

But beware of that demon "indigestion." I've had some myself, and unpleasant recollections of a certain Christmas when I sampled the pudding not wisely but too well still linger in my mind.

Christmas comes but once a year—make the most of it!

The GEM comes along fifty-two times a year. That's a consolation, isn't it? You've found it a good pal through 1928—you'll find it a better pal still in the year that is to come. I've all manner of wheezes "up my sleeve" for 1929. Just you wait and see. Meantime, fill up that glass with ginger-pop. Ready? Now a health to Mr. Martin Clifford. Like the idea? Good!

In reply Mr. Clifford wishes you all "The Happiest of Happy Christmases!"





Not bothering to quieten their footsteps now, the juniors moved slowly along the cloistered walks, the party splitting into two for that purpose, and Kerr and Digby waiting by the entrance lest the fugitive broke through.

That the "ghost" was hiding somewhere among the cloister arches, the juniors knew. It was simply a matter of moments before they discovered his hiding-place.

"Hark!" cried Figgins. "Listen—over there!"

A shout, and sounds of a struggle, had come to the ears of Figgins, Tom Merry and Lowther from the opposite side of the cloisters. The three darted out into the open space in the centre, and rushed across the snow to the opposite walk. Scrambling in through one of the arches, they saw Talbot, Blake, and Herries and D'Arcy struggling fiercely with a tall, white-hooded figure.

The "ghost" had been caught at last!

"Pile in!" roared Tom Merry; and with Figgins and Monty Lowther at his heels the captain of the Shell raced to join the struggle.

In the dim light it was no easy task to collar that eerie shape. Whoever it was hidden beneath that hooded garment, he was somebody exceptionally powerful, and filled now with a desperation that lent him extra strength.

Talbot went spinning before a smashing blow in the face, and Blake was flung against a pillar with cruel force. Tom, his arms wound round the figure's waist, was beaten off by a volley of terrible blows that left him dazed and reeling.

"Hold him!" panted Arthur Augustus. "Don't let the wottah get away!"

Running feet came pounding along the cloisters as Manners and Redfern, Digby and Kerr rushed to help their chums.

The tall, white figure evidently heard them coming, for he redoubled his efforts and broke away suddenly, leaving three juniors on the flagstones, and Herries leaning dazedly against a pillar, utterly helpless for the moment to join in the pursuit.

"After him!" shouted Tom Merry.

With a rush, the juniors raced in pursuit of the flying figure.

After a tremendous spurt, Tom shot ahead from the rest, and flung forward, gripping the fugitive round the waist. It was a daring action, and Tom was flung to the ground with the figure he was clutching, as the unknown staggered and fell. But the wiry, athletic youngster managed to twist round, so that the "spectre" was underneath. There was a dull thud as the figure's head struck the flagstones.

One groan, and then the white "monk" lay still, arms outflung.

Tom staggered to his feet.

"Cracked his head on the flagstones!" panted the captain of the Shell. "He's stunned, I think. Now to see who the blessed ghost of St. Jim's really is!"

As the others crowded in tense silence, Tom Merry stooped and drew back the hood that covered the face of the unknown.

"My hat!" breathed Tom.

The others stared down wonderingly. They scarcely knew whom they expected to see; but the sight of the hooded face that was now revealed, staring up at them with opening, flickering eyes, filled them with amazement.

"My hat!" repeated Tom Merry wonderingly. "Luke Crow!"



CHAPTER 17. The Mystery Solved!



"LUKE CROW!"

"Gwent Scott!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy adjusted his eyeglass and stared down at the face of the poacher in utter bewilderment. "What the dickens can have brought the scoundrel heah?"

That was a question which none of the juniors could answer.

Luke Crow groaned and passed a hand across his eyes.

But the daze seemed to be clearing from his stunned brain. He blinked up at the circle of faces round him, and an ugly look of savage hatred sprang into his eyes.

"So you've got me, you young cubs!" he snarled.

"I should keep a civil tongue in your head, if I were you!" said Talbot sharply.

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"Heah, heah!" nodded Arthur Augustus.

The man tried to struggle up. But he sank back.

"My head!" he muttered.

"I fancy this is a case for the sanny," grunted Manners.

"That was a nasty crack on the napper."

But why had Luke Crow come to St. Jim's in that strange disguise? That was the question all the juniors were puzzling over.

Without doubt, it had been this same man who had been seen before, in that same weird costume which had made all St. Jim's believe that it was someone impersonating the famous ghost monk of the old legend—and had even persuaded some of the more timid fellows that it was the ghost itself, though few of them had admitted their belief!

"Look here," said Tom quietly, "we want to know what you were up to!"

"Find out!" came the muttered answer.

And then a fresh voice broke in from behind them which made the juniors jump and give gasps of consternation.

"Bless my soul! What is happening here? Merry—Figgins—all of you! What are you doing out here at this time of night?"

"The Head!" gasped Blake.

Dr. Holmes had approached unheard, and was staring in amazement and anger at the group of juniors. But as they turned to face him, revealing the white figure of Luke Crow on the flagstones, the headmaster of St. Jim's jumped and gave a startled gasp.

"Bless my soul! What—what does this all mean?"

Dr. Holmes had been sitting up late over the results of the end-of-term exams, and had come out for a stroll round the cloisters to clear his head in the cold night air before going to bed. The sight of a group of juniors had come as a shock to him; but the sight of Luke Crow, whom he knew well by sight, and knew to be an out-and-out scoundrel, lying there in his monkish garb caused the Head to wonder whether he was in his right senses.

"Crow, you scoundrel, what are you doing here in that costume?" thundered the Head.

Luke Crow kept a sullen silence. Rapidly Tom Merry explained.

"So this solves the mystery of the blessed spook, sir," he finished up. "I—I mean, of the supposed ghost, sir. Though why this rotter—I mean, this man—should have come here, is still a mystery!"

The Head nodded. He had heard from Mr. Railton of the mysterious spectral figure that the Housemaster had seen, with the juniors, from the windows of the Shell dormitory.

"Crow!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes sternly.

There was no reply. With a groan, the scoundrel had fainted again. Evidently the blow on the head that he had received had been a terrible one.

"I fear he is insensible," muttered the headmaster. "But you boys did not do right in leaving your dormitories. But in the circumstances, since you have been successful in catching a dangerous character who must have been on the premises for some criminal purpose, I will overlook your transgressions."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" chorused the juniors, with great relief.

In the meantime, one of you—Blake—go and arouse Taggles. This man may be a scoundrel, but since he is hurt we must treat him with humanity. Taggles, with your aid, can carry him to the sanatorium, where he can be attended to. He cannot be badly hurt, fortunately. And later, the police must be informed of his illegal presence on the school premises."

Blake sped off. There was a sudden exclamation from Talbot.

"Hallo! What's this?"

An object that had apparently fallen from Luke Crow's pocket was lying on the ground beside the man, half-hidden by the white gown. Talbot picked it up. It was a wallet, with the initials W. T. R. on it. And inside, as Talbot opened it, were to be seen wads of paper money.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed the Head, taking the wallet quickly from Talbot's hands. "W. T. R.! Why—bless my soul, yes—it must be!"

Swiftly the Head examined the money. There was no less a sum than sixty-one pounds in Treasury and Bank of England notes.

"W. T. R.!" repeated the Head, a note of eager interest in his deep voice. "Those are the initials of an unfortunate motorist who was attacked on the road near Rylcombe some days ago and robbed by an unknown scoundrel! It was in the newspapers."

(Continued on page 31.)





Christmastide is the time for legends, and no legend is so romantic as the one so vividly described below. When you sing the famous ballad, perhaps your thoughts will dwell upon the true story of the "Mistletoe Bough"!

THE OLD OAK CHEST

WHAT party of Waits has not thrilled their listeners, tucked up snug and warm in bed as the midnight hour that ushers in Christmas Day approaches, with the haunting melody of "The Mistletoe Bough"?

The old oaken chest that has lived in Christmas music for over eighty years has attached to it a legend which doubtless will live as long as Christmas itself continues to be kept. The old ballad is inseparable from memories of an ancient oaken chest wherein a young bride hid, as a Christmas prank, and was never seen alive again.

On her wedding day the bride slipped away from the jolly Christmas party, thinking to set all the guests who were filling the old castle with happy laughter hunting high and low for her directly she—the very life and soul of the Christmas festivities—was missed.

THE FATAL PRANK!

She found the very hiding-place in which she was certain no one would look. High and low the search was conducted, her husband, young Lovel, nearly frantic with alarm.

Surely, they all said, the beautiful young bride would bob out presently from some cleverly contrived place of concealment and laugh at them all for their pains!

By ones and twos the guests and retainers dropped out of the search, growing tired of what they were gradually believing to be a piece of high-spirited mischief by the young hostess, and presently again—

"Lovel's retainers were bright and gay,
Keeping their Christmas holiday!"

But Lovel himself was prostrate with grief. No one would believe his young bride could have a single enemy in the length and breadth of the land. And it was unthinkable that anyone would carry her off or do her mischief on their wedding day of all days—Christmas Day, too!

Not one of the scores of people assembled in the castle thought to seek the missing girl in the ancient coffer in the great hall. But there it was that her skeleton was found, long years afterwards, when many Christmas days had come and gone, and the mistletoe and holly that had decorated the castle on that fatal Christmas Day had withered and turned to dust and been forgotten.

SHUT WITH A SNAP!

The oaken coffer was smothered with dust, too, when a stranger forced the lid and saw therein the skeleton of the girl whose tragic history has passed into an unforgettable Christmas ballad.

"At length an old chest that had long lain hid
Was found in the castle—they raised the lid;
A skeleton form lay mouldering there,
With the bridal wreath of that lady fair.
Oh, sad was her fate! In sportive jest,
She hid from her lord in that old oak chest;
It closed with a spring, and her bridal bloom
Lay withering there in a living tomb!"

Then the solution of the mysterious disappearance was revealed. To open the lid with a key was easy enough. To open it from the inside was impossible. The chest shut with a snap,

and once the lid had closed down a spring prevented it from being raised again by anyone foolhardy enough to choose it as a hiding-place.

That was the fate that had overtaken young Lovel's bride. She had slipped in, thinking to slip out as easily when the search for her had continued long enough. But all her efforts to force the lid had failed. Her repeated and at last

frantic knockings on the heavy oak timbers had passed unheard, and the coffer became her coffin.

THE LEGEND'S HOME.

Many historic houses claim to be the place of the old legend from which Hayne Bayley took the idea for his ballad, among them Exton Hall, and Malshanger, near Basingstoke. But even the chest itself has never been identified with absolute certainty. One old writer describes it as:

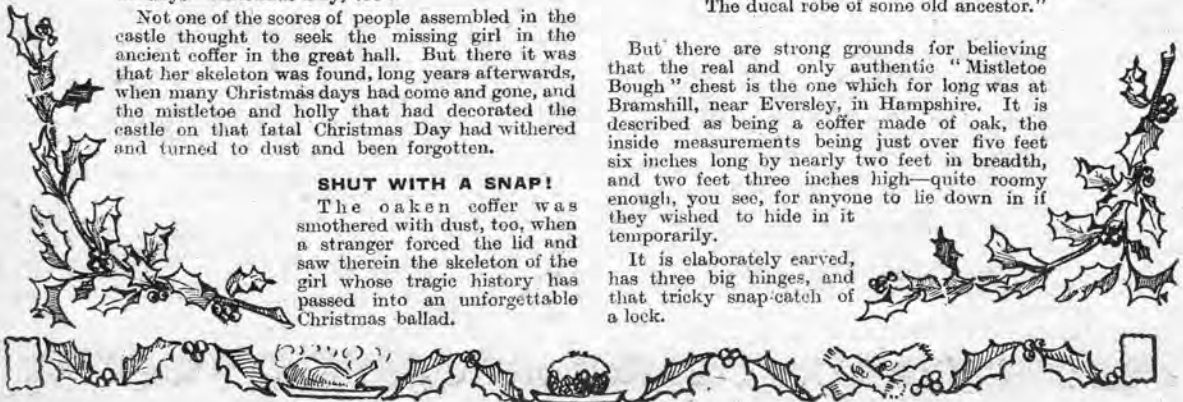
"An oaken chest half eaten by the worm,
But richly carved by Antony of Trent,
With scripture stories from the life of Christ—
A chest that came from Venice, and had held
The dual robe of some old ancestor."

But there are strong grounds for believing that the real and only authentic "Mistletoe Bough" chest is the one which for long was at Bramshill, near Eversley, in Hampshire. It is described as being a coffer made of oak, the inside measurements being just over five feet six inches long by nearly two feet in breadth, and two feet three inches high—quite roomy enough, you see, for anyone to lie down in if they wished to hide in it temporarily.

It is elaborately carved, has three big hinges, and that tricky snap-catch of a lock.



The old oaken chest round which a wonderful legend is woven.



SEA ADVENTURES AND PERILS!

With full steam up the Bombay Castle boys race away from the perilous Island of Bungaloo—only to crash head-first into further trouble!

CHUMS of the BOMBAY CASTLE

by DUNCAN STORM



OUR ROLLICKING SERIAL OF THRILLING ADVENTURE, DEALING WITH THE EXPLOITS OF DICK DORRINGTON & CO., HORACE, GUS, AND LAL TATA, OF THE SCHOOL SHIP BOMBAY CASTLE.

INTRODUCTION.

Dick Dorrington & Co., of the school ship Bombay Castle, together with their master, Mr. Lal Tata, are detailed to search for a shipload of movie actors who have mysteriously disappeared somewhere within the vicinity of the pirate-infested waters of the Archipelagoes of Pahang. In addition to the crew are the ship's pets—Horace, the goat, Gus the crocodile, and Cecil the ape. On nearing Bungaloo the boys are captured by Pirates and taken before the sultan, who falsely accuses them of smuggling and imprisons them in a leopard's cage in the palace courtyard. They are rescued from their perilous position by the ship's pets and John Henry, the sultan's sacred elephant, who proves to be an old friend of Mr. Pugsley, the Bombay Castle's gunner. Armed with a selection of choice weapons from the sultan's armoury in case of emergency, the Bombay Castle party reach their steamboat in safety. They are barely through the narrow passages of the coral reefs, however, before the pirates are hard on their heels again. After a hard tussle the pirates are beaten off. Leaving the enemy far behind, the chums of the Bombay Castle adjourn below for a well-earned supper.

(Now read on.)

The Locked Chest!

"WE'VE got a tin of brawn," suggested Skeleton. "I saw someone slogging one of those pirates with our cooked ham. Has it gone overboard?"

But the fighting ham was discovered lying in the coils of the halliards, and it was inspected and discovered to be none the worse for having taken part in the fight of the Bungaloo Passage.

Skeleton set to work and cut sandwiches as skilfully as if he had worked in a ham-and-beef shop all his life, whilst Chip made a huge can of coffee.

Then the chums gathered on deck round the engine-room hatch, with an extra saucer of pickles for Mr. Pugsley.

"When I been scrappin'," said Mr. Pugsley, "there's nothing I like better than a pickled onion."

"You ought to eat the onions before the fight, Puggo, and breathe on the enemy!" said Arty. "But tell us, why on earth did that chap blunder down in the cabin and rummage round and steal a can of brawn, just the very thing that would be an abomination to them?"

"And why did someone shout to us to heave-to in New York English?" said Mr. Pugsley, daintily skewering a pickled onion on to his claspknife. "It's my opinion that those chaps think we've got something on board that they want."

"I'm with you, Puggo," said Conkey. "And if you ask me, I think it is the steel box that I lifted from the sultan's bed-room."

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"Steel box—eh?" said Mr. Pugsley. "This is the first I've heard of a steel box."

"I picked it up to defend myself with," said Conkey.

"Funny thing to defend yourself with, wasn't it?" said Mr. Pugsley.

"Well, it seemed a handy thing to me," said Conkey modestly. "And I thought that it might contain some jewels or money—pieces of eight, gold moldores, fair rose nobles, and so forth."

"You are always out for a bit of business, you are, young Conk," said Mr. Pugsley admiringly. "I should call that burglary, if we was at home," he added.

"You can't burgle a pirate," said Conkey. "If pirates take one prisoner, and one lifts some of their looted treasure, one is only getting a bit of one's own back. Besides, the sultan said that we might keep the weapons we had taken from his palace."

"Perhaps he did not know that you'd got his box of treasure," said Mr. Pugsley. "Weapons are not jewellery, after all. But what did you do with the box?"

"Why," said Conkey, "when we were in that mob on the wharf, I saw a chap glaring at the box under my arm, and something told me that he was going to make a grab for it. The chap was that selfsame fat chap who was advising the sultan to put us in quod. I pretended to drop the box in the crush and to pick it up again. But I conjured it. I slipped the box in the bag along with Gus, where no one was likely to disturb it, and I picked up a square black paving-stone of the same size, which I tucked under my arm. And the chap snatched that and got away with it!"

"Now I begin to see daylight," said Mr. Pugsley. "Now I begin to see some of the milk in the coconut. Where's that box?"

"Why, it's down in the cricket bag with old Gus, just under your feet," said Conkey.

"Did you put it in at the head or the tail end of the bag?" asked Mr. Pugsley cautiously. "Cause Gus ain't in what you might call a good mood. When we was scrapping down in the engine-room, 'e got kicked in the slats, once or twice, through the bag."

"It's at the head end," said Conkey. "I dropped it in just as they were packing him in the bag."

Mr. Pugsley dropped down below, and, cautiously opening the end of the bag, slipped in a ten-pound spanner.

Gus at once chewed on the steel like a teething baby.

Mr. Pugsley let him chew, and dropped in between his enormous jaws the engine-room vice, a roll of sheet lead, and a steel crowbar.

Having thus given Gus something to occupy his jaws,





he lifted out the steel box which Conkey had annexed and brought it up on deck.

The box was beautifully worked, with a sunk steel lid and a decoration of hand-cut steel round the keyhole.

Mr. Pugsley examined it with the eye of a connoisseur.

"That's the real rar-rah in the way of a treasure-chest, and worth a hundred crackers itself. Old Japanese, that is, and made by a craftsman. I suppose you didn't pinch the key as well, Conkey?"

"No," said Conkey. "I expect the sultan's got that."

"Well, I can tell you straight away," said Mr. Pugsley, "that chest can't be opened by anything we've got aboard. It's made of Japanese sword blades, and they are thin plates of finest steel welded together, and tempered better than anything we've got in England. You could give that box to all the cracksmen in Europe, and they couldn't open it short of blowing it in with dynamite."

"I've got the key of my tuckbox and the bicycle-shed at home," suggested Skeleton hopefully.

"Don't talk silly!" snorted Mr. Pugsley. "Why, there's only one key in the world that will open that box, and that's the key that was cut by the chap who made it. You are like a monkey with a cokeanut that 'e can't open, Master Conkey!"

"What are we going to do about it?" asked Conkey. "I was hoping to touch a few quids to buck up the treasury of the Glory Hole Gang. We are as near broke as makes no diff. I've been lending the gang money for a fortnight."

"If I was you, I would put that box back in the bag with ole Cecil," said Mr. Pugsley. "And you've got a very good example, for when the Indian rajahs of old used to bury a bit of treasure, they generally buried a couple of cobras with it, so that if any thief came mucking about with their durions they died o' snake bite afore they touched the quids!"

Everyone thought this was a good idea except Skeleton. He thought he could wangle the box with his tuckbox key, having had long experience in opening his money-box when he was a kid. Skeleton considered himself a real "Jim, the Crackman."

But, by general consent, the box was eventually put back into the cricket-bag with Gus, and, with the engine running smoothly, Mr. Pugsley steered the "D.S.B." over the calm, oily sea, which reflected the stars like a mirror.

The boys would have liked to sit up and make a night of it; but Mr. Pugsley had other ideas.

"You've had your supper, boys," he announced, "and it's time for a bit of shut-eye!"

"I should love to sit up all night and see the tropic dawn," suggested Willie Waffles. "Would you not love to see the dawn come up, Algy?" he asked his pal, Algy Cuff.

"My dear Willie," replied Algy, "there is nothing I should like better. They say that the bursting of dawn in these seas is simply tremendous—aw!—good as a firework display—all pink and gold and old rose!"

"Well, you ain't going to see any pink dawns!" replied Mr. Pugsley practically. "When you come to my time o' life you won't be so anxious to see the dawn come up like thunder outa China across the bay; you'd sooner stop in your little kip and 'ear someone call you at eight o'clock with a nice cup o' tea!"

"But, my dear Puggo—" urged Algy.

"I'm not your dear Puggo!" said Mr. Pugsley. "You and your toff pal 'op it to your bng-walks! I want you all bright and fresh to-morrow morning. You've got a bit to go through in the next few days, give you my word! I don't want a lot of pink-eyed, sick-headachy kids on my 'ands!"

"But can't we help you with the navigation?" begged Algy.

"No, thanks!" replied Mr. Pugsley. "Not in these waters, where you can chuck a biscuit on to a coral-reef every 'arf-mile! You go and turn in!"

"Can't we sleep on deck?" urged Willie. "It's so fuggy down below!"

"Look 'ere!" said Mr. Pugsley. "This is a ship, not a kids' 'ome; you do as you are told! Sleep on deck in this dew, and you'll all be down with tummy-ache and colic to-morrow morning! Go to bed!"

There was no more room for argument after that.

The crowd went down below and, in the dim light of the lamp, prepared to stow themselves away in the hanging cots and bunks with which their little craft was provided.

Two Terrible Visitors.

OLD Cecil, the ape, remained above to keep watch with Mr. Pugsley. Cecil was as good as a Malay look-out, for his eyes at night were like a cat's eyes.

Cecil pulled a gunny sack over his head to protect himself against the dew and laid another sack over his shoulders as a wrap. Then he perched himself on the cabin top close by Mr. Pugsley, peering through the night towards the loom of the hills of the Island of Pahang, under which showed a distant light now and then—the light of some fishing-boat working by torchlight alongshore.

Cecil never suffered from lack of sleep, and Mr. Pugsley had learned in the Navy to sleep when he got a chance. He could sleep on the edge of a board when the time came to sleep. Just now he was very watchful and wideawake, much on the look out for anything that might happen. And he trusted Cecil to keep watch.

Just now Mr. Pugsley's mind was very busy with the strange happenings of the previous evening. He was quite at a loss to account for the queer counsellor who had stood behind the young sultan and who had kicked Hamish McCosh in the stomach—the man of mystery, who talked the lingo of the Archipelago, that queer mash of Malay and Indo-Chinese, with a New York accent.

"It's a rum start, Cecil!" said Mr. Pugsley, as he steered his little ship through the night.

Cecil grunted assent.

He brought his treasures out of his pockets and counted them like a Lower Form kid. He blew into the brass bedstead knob and tried to blow down the key which he had on a bit of string.

"They are a funny lot, Cecil!" continued Mr. Pugsley, who always talked to Cecil as if he were a human being.

The orang grunted again.

"And there's more under that young sultan's 'at than 'air!" said Mr. Pugsley. "I'd very much like to know what's become of the Star of the East and Claude Fairbrother, the Flapper's Delight. Maybe ole Claude is doing a bit more real acting in the thrill line than 'e ever bargained for," he added thoughtfully.

Cecil agreed with another grunt, fished a banana out of his pocket, and ate it thoughtfully.

"Them boys are taking a long time settling down, Cecil!" said Mr. Pugsley. "Thank goodness I never took it into my 'ead to become a schoolmaster. They told me I was silly when I went to sea, but a sailor has a better time than a schoolmaster! One boy is a boy, you see, Cecil. Anyone can manage one boy. But two boys is only half a boy. While you are chasing one, t'other is dodging round the Jimmy 'Orner. And three boys is a barrowload of young monkeys when they get together! It ain't all lavender to be a schoolmaster! 'Ark to them ragging ole Lal!"

Mr. Pugsley could hear Mr. Lal Tata complaining down in the cabin.

"Now, boys," urged Lal's voice, "for goodness' sakes stop that racket and get to your bye-byes. And who is the boy who has sewn up the stomach-band of my pyjamas and painted broad arrows in ink over them? Who is the boy who has painted 'Convict 99' on my pyjama jacket? It is a foolsome thing to do and most annoying!"

Up at the steering-wheel Mr. Pugsley chuckled.

"They aren't 'arf givin' ole Lal a Saturday night of it!" he said to Cecil.

Gradually the boys settled down into their hanging cots. Lal tied his head up in a silk handkerchief and prepared himself for slumber.

"Now, if you boys will settle down," said he, "I will turn out the lamp and we will all go to sleep."

"All right, sir!" replied a dozen dutiful voices. "Good-night, sir!"

"Good-night, boys!" said Lal. "And I wish you some pleasant dreams after this so strenuous and worrying day!"

Lal turned out the lamp, and for a few moments all was silence in the cabin.

Then Hamish McCosh spoke.

"Conk!" he said. "Conkie boy!"

"What?" asked Conkey, in a whisper.

"I'll trouble ye to tak' yer feet oot o' my ear!" said Hamish. "I'll no be gettin' to sleep at a' if ye tickle ma ear all night!"

"It's not my feet, it's Pongo's," replied Conkey. "He's asleep!"

"Gie him a dig in the slats an' wake him up!" said Hamish.

Pongo Walker, admonished by a hearty jab in the ribs from Conkey, woke with a start and a yell.

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"Wha—what is it?" he demanded, sitting up suddenly in his cot and bringing his head with a thump against the bearers of the

cabin roof. "What's up?"

"Nothing is up!" answered Conk. "But take your toes out of Hamish's ear. He don't like it!"

"What's the matter with my toes?" grumbled Pongo. "I'm not charging him anything. Do you mean to say that is all you woke me up for?"

"Boys! Boys!" urged Mr. Lal Tata from his cot. "Do please compose yourself to slumber!"

"Ah! I'll compose myself to slumber, sir, when you durrruty dog Pongo keeps his feet oot o' ma mouth!" complained Hamish.

"It's a short berth, sir," explained Pongo, "and my feet will stick out at the end of it!"

"Lie on your back and bend your knees up!" ordered Mr. Lal Tata.

"When I lie on my back I always dream, sir," complained Pongo. "I get nightmare. When I was a kid—"

Mr. Lal Tata groaned; he did not want to hear what happened to Pongo when he was a kid.

"My dear Walker," he protested, "please go to sleep!" Pongo, with a sigh, laid on his back and drew up his knees.

One by one the boys dropped off to sleep.

Only Pongo remained awake watching the patch of moonlight that fell through the cabin skylight, moving backwards and forwards as the launch rolled slightly on the smooth sea.

Hamish snored.

"The dirty dog!" thought Pongo. "He doesn't care what happens to my night's rest so long as he gets to sleep himself and snores like a pig. That's the worst of people in this world. They are all selfish!"

Pongo was beginning to feel quite sorry for himself by now. He could hear Mr. Pugsley talking in a low monotone to Cecil up on deck.

"The young imps are all asleep now, Cecil!" Mr. Pugsley was saying.

Pongo felt very hot. The atmosphere of the cabin was stifling, and one or two of the lads were beginning to join in a chorus of snoring which was led by Mr. Lal Tata.

Mr. Lal Tata was well away, snoring like a grampus. He was sawing wood by the ton. Then Conkey started.

"Lummy, I can't stand this much longer!" thought Pongo. "This jazz band of snores and fugs is too thick for me. I've half a mind to go on deck and chance Puggo ordering me below again!"

Pongo waited a moment or two, propped up on his pillows. "Yes, I'll go on deck!" said he.

He reached in the little rack alongside him for his slippers and put them on. Then he dropped one leg over the side of his berth.

Pongo felt something move. There was a rustling on the cabin floor. He thought he had touched something with his foot, something that moved.

Swiftly he drew up his foot again and sat up in his bunk. Then he stared pop-eyed at something which had moved into the shifting square of the moonlight on the floor. It had settled itself on Chip Prodgers' flannel bags which he had dropped on the floor before getting into his berth.

"I've got the night terrors all right, asleep or awake!" muttered Pongo.

For there, in the patch of moonlight, coiled on Chip's flannel bags, was a huge king cobra, which sat up swaying to the movement of the vessel with inflated hood and quivering forked tongue!

Well Played, Chip!

PONGO WALKER stared at the cobra sitting on the trousers.

The cobra stared at Pongo and inflated its great hood, and gave forth an unpleasant hiss, sending its forked tongue quivering in and out of its mouth.

Mr. Lal Tata snored loudly.

He would not have snored had he known of the unpleasant occupant of the cabin which had worked its way up from the bilges of the "D.S.B."

Pongo was at a loss to know what to do. He did not

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want to create a disturbance lest the beast should be annoyed.

Chip was sleeping in a swing cot just behind him, and Pongo, half fascinated by the glittering emerald eyes of the hideous snake, gently pinched Chip's toe, which was close by his own head.

"Whatcherwant?" demanded Chip drowsily.

"There's a snake in the cabin!" whispered Pongo.

"Go away, Pongo!" mumbled Chip, turning over in his cot and digging his head into the pillows. "You're getting nightmares!"

There was a rustling on the floor of the cabin, and Pongo stared pop-eyed at the patch of moonlight, for another huge cobra joined the first and coiled on Chip's flannel trousers.

"There's two cobras now," whispered Pongo. "They are sitting on your trousers, Chip!"

Chip moved in his berth and reached for his bottle of quinine tabloids and a bottle of Eno's fruit salts!

"You've got a dose of fever, Pongo!" he answered. "Take a couple of these tabloids now, and a handful of old Eno's in the morning, and you'll be all right by breakfast-time! Snakes! My word!"

"I tell you that there are two snakes on your trousers," said Pongo. "And I haven't got fever. My temperature is below normal. In fact, I can feel cold shivers running down my spine when I look at the brutes!"

Chip opened one sleepy eye, which fell on the patch of moonlight and his flannel bags!

"Lummy!" he exclaimed. "Keep quiet, Pongo. Don't get out of bed!"

"You bet I won't!" answered Pongo promptly. "What are you going to do about 'em?" he added.

"I'll show you in half a mo'!" answered Chip.

He reached into the rack where he had placed his catapult and leaden bullets after the fight with the pirates. Chip's catapult was never far from his hand.

He fitted a leaden ball into the sling and held another in the palm of his hand.

Then he waited till the rolling of the ship brought the flash of moonlight across the two coiled, speckled shapes.

Chip gave a hiss.

Instantly the two hooded heads rose aggressively, and the hoods were inflated as they passed into the shadow with the motion of the cabin floor.

Chip hissed again.

When the spotlight of the moon swung again on the heads the great hoods showed fully inflated, the dark spectacle markings showing plainly.

Slap, slap!

Two leaden bullets flew from the catapult, with unerring swiftness. The two heads dropped as two snakes' necks were broken.

Then a howl arose from Mr. Lal Tata's bunk, and he clapped his hand to the small of his back.

"What is this?" he demanded. "Who shoots catapults in the cabin?"

"It was me, sir," replied Chip. "Sorry I got you on the ricochet."

"I will get you on some ricochets!" answered Mr. Lal Tata, fuming as he sat up in his bunk rubbing his back. "I shall confiscate catapults at once, and you shall do me ten thousand lines—"

"Half a mo', sir!" said Chip. "Don't get out of bed till you have lit the lamp. The matches are just by your hand in that rack!"

"I need no lamps to take away that rascal plaything and throw it overboard!" stormed Mr. Lal Tata, getting ready to pull on his slippers.

"No, you'll need a lamp if you don't want to step on a pair of king cobras which are on my flannel trousers on the floor!" replied Chip. "That's what I was plugging at. And I don't know if I've killed 'em both yet."

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Mr. Lal Tata. "King cobras!"

"I expect they were a parting present from our pal the young sultan," said Chip, grinning in the darkness.

The boys were waking now.

"What's wrong?" demanded the voice of Hamish McCosh.

"Don't put your foot out of bed, Mac," said Chip, "or you may poison a cobra. There's a couple on the floor."

"Cosh!" exclaimed Hamish. "An' I hate snakes. They are awfu' uncanny beasties!"

Mr. Lal Tata was scratching a matchbox in the darkness.

"The matches will not light!" he exclaimed in rather

shaky tones.

(Continued on page 30.)





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Chip hissed again, as the spotlight of moon swung round on the waving heads of the two cobras. The next moment there was a sharp twang as Chip let fly with his catapult! (See page 23.)



"Maybe you are trying to strike 'em on your safety-razor box, sir," suggested Dick Dorrington.

"By Jove, you are right!" said Mr. Lal Tata. "But I am greatly agitated. I hate the cobra—especially the king cobra. He is a horrid fellow. Perhaps there are more cobras in the boat."

"I don't think so, sir," answered Chip. "I think they are a pair—male and female."

Mr. Lal Tata soon had the lamp going, and looked down with horror upon the coiled shapes.

"I think they are dead," said he—"dead as Queen Annes! Who saw them?"

"I saw them with my little eye, sir," said Pongo, "and Chip shot them with his bow and arrows."

"A splendid shot!" said Mr. Lal Tata, forgetting the rebound of the bullet which had caught him. "A splendid shot! We ought to pass hearty votes of thanks to Chip, boys!"

"Do you want me to chuck my catty overboard, sir?" asked Chip meekly.

"Certainly not!" answered Mr. Lal Tata. "But if you are sure those brutes are dead, throw them overboard. Pick them up on the trousers as they are."

"No!" exclaimed Chip. "I don't want my trousers chucked overboard."

Mr. Pugsley, hearing the noise of voices below, and seeing the cabin illuminated peeped down the scuttle.

"Below there?" he asked. "Anybody ill?"

"No," answered Chip; "but there was a pair of cobras loose down here; must have worked up out of the bilges."

"Hey?" demanded Mr. Pugsley, unable to believe his ears. "Were they big 'uns?"

"King cobras!" answered Chip. "That dirty little dog the sultan must have wangled them aboard."

"Lummy!" exclaimed Mr. Pugsley as the bodies of the cobras were brought up into the moonshine slung in a bath towel. "Ow did you kill 'em?"

"Catty," said Chip laconically.

"That's a bit of crossroads work if you like!" said Mr. Pugsley, regarding the dead snakes with repulsion. "You wouldn't want two kisses from one of those blokes to put your light out for you. Just show you the sort of people we are dealing with. These 'ere Orientals—"

And Mr. Pugsley broke off tactfully as he saw Mr. Lal Tata standing in the background of the group which were gathered round the dead snakes.

"Chuck 'em overside!" he added. "I hate snakes worse'n cold real!"

The bath towel was lifted, and the snakes were committed to the depths of the Bungaloo Channel.

"Now, Pongo," said Dick Dorrington, "we shan't sleep any more to-night. And I'm sure you don't want to shut us down in that frowsy cabin, where there might be some more snakes."

Mr. Pugsley was rummaging down in his little engine-room. Soon he produced a bag of canvas, a thick leathern glove, and a tie of raw silk cord.

"There's only two of 'em," said he. "'Ere's the snake bag and the glove of the charmer that loosed 'em aboard. This is Bungaloo canvas, of native hemp. There's no doubt about it. Those snakes were put aboard to do us a bit of no good. I tell you, boys, we are surrounded by a movie mystery, and you needn't go back to bed if you don't want to. The sun will be up in another half-hour!"

"We might have an early breakfast," said Skeleton hopefully; for he always liked to wangle in an extra meal if he could.

"You can make some early-morning tea and you can bring up the biscuit bag, if that's what you mean," agreed Mr. Pugsley.

Skeleton soon had the kettle on the boil, and a huge can of tea was made. The biscuit bag was brought up, with a small tub of butter, and all hands gathered round.

The land had nearly faded from sight as the day broke, and Mr. Pugsley—with a biscuit and butter in one hand, and a pair of dividers in the other—ordered the dew to be dried from the cabin-top, and laid out his chart to study it.

"We'll raise Canjee Island by nine o'clock, boys," said he. "That'll be nicely after breakfast. That's a funny place; and I'd like to see it, by any chance, the Star of the East is piled up there. Mind you, we've got to remember that she may be stranded. One of these 'ere movie corporations is not likely to get 'old of a good ship, or a good skipper, just to make films. Anything is good enough for a movie actor, they think. It don't matter to them if they pile up a cargo o' supers and Venetian noblemen; they are used enough to eating cardboard-pies on the stage and pork-pies off it. Now, we'll clean ship and scrub decks. And you can bring ole Gus up on deck and give 'im a good scrub down with sand and sooji-mooji; 'e wants a bath!"

(But little did the Bombay Castle chums, realise, as they set to work with a will, that they were shortly to come face to face with the most thrilling adventure of their lives. Don't get left out of it, boys—see next week's instalment.)



**"THE HAUNTED SCHOOL!"***(Continued from page 24.)*

"I heard something of that, sir!" put in Tom Merry excitedly. "A man named Renfrew!"

"Exactly," nodded the Head. "And as far as my memory serves, it was just such a sum as this that he declared he had lost—sixty pounds or so!"

"Then how on earth has this wuffian got it, unless he was the wottah that wobbled the unfortunate Mr. Wenfrew?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"That will doubtless soon be cleared up," said the Head. "Ah. Here comes Taggles!"

And the matter was cleared up very soon, thanks to a sullen confession from Luke Crow, who saw—when he returned to his senses in the sanatorium at St. Jim's—that the game was up.

He admitted that it was he who had attacked and robbed the motorist near Rylcombe, and had succeeded in getting away with the wallet and its valuable contents. He also admitted that he was in the habit of going on poaching expeditions in the neighbourhood, when there was snow, in the hooded white garment that he had been wearing when captured. The purpose of it was obvious—to cover his dark clothes and so make himself an almost invisible figure against the white countryside.

He had been out on such an expedition when he had taken the opportunity of robbing the unfortunate motorist. And later that same evening, with the stolen money still on him, he had been discovered poaching and had been pursued by keepers. He had taken refuge in the school premises, knowing that his pursuers would not look for him there—and had later discovered that he had dropped

the stolen wallet somewhere under the school elms in the snow.

He had returned on the following night, still wearing his concealing white robe, and had searched in vain for the missing wallet. He had not dared come again until another snowfall for fear of being seen. But trusting to his white garment to render him almost invisible, he had returned again on the first night of snow to continue his search. And this time he had been fortunate enough to find the money—but unfortunate enough to be seen by the juniors and caught!

"So that's the mystery of the ghost monk!" grinned Tom Merry, when he heard of the poacher's confession in the Common-room.

"Well, he helped to make the end of term interestin'," drawled Cardew of the Fourth.

"Heah, heah!" nodded Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Tom clapped the swell of St. Jim's on the back. Arthur Augustus had just issued an invitation to Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther to spend their Christmas holidays at Eastwood House, together with Blake & Co., and the Terrible Three had accepted the invitation joyfully. They always had a good time at Eastwood House.

"So while we're enjoying our Christmas dinner at your place, Gussy, Luke Crow will be enjoying his in clink!" grinned Tom Merry. "Well, he's a scoundrel, and he jolly well deserves it. That, and the way we put it across the New House last night, makes a pretty good finish to the term!"

"And so say all of us!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Eh, you chaps?"

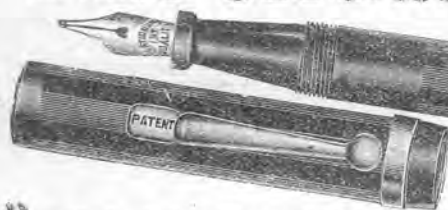
And the School House juniors, to a man, agreed that it did!

THE END.

(Make sure you meet Tom Merry & Co., at Eastwood House, in next week's thrilling yarn, entitled: "THE CURSE OF THE D'ARCY'S!" There's not a dull moment from first time to last.)

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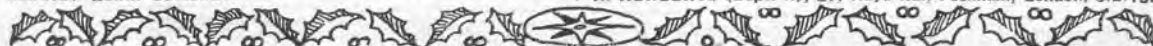
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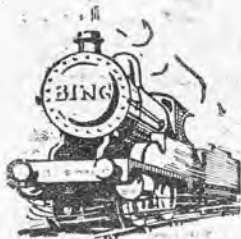
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